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Preview by Jan Timman

Carlsen and Caruana annotate key encounters

Carlsen Caruana

London, November 2018

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In the mood

The World Championship match in London between Magnus Carlsen and Fabiano Caruana is easily the most anticipated event of the year. Duels for the highest title are always fascinating and often dramatic, and this one is surrounded by an unusual additional suspense. For the first time since he became World Champion in 2013, Carlsen is not the undisputable, odds-on favourite. If push comes to shove, most of the pundits still lean towards the Norwegian in their predictions, but there are doubts, too. Because Caruana has become such a formidable opponent.

Following his win in the Candidates tournament in Berlin earlier this year, the American continued to play consistently well, winning tournaments and confidently claiming second place in the rating list. Not that long ago, Carlsen used to top the world rankings way ahead of the rest, but in the past few months, the gap between the numbers one and two has shrunk to an almost negligible number of points.

On the bright side, the World Champion can claim that the last time he lost to Caruana was three years ago.

The match promises to be a close fight in which the smallest details may make the difference. With this special digital edition, we hope to get you into the mood for the clash in London. Jan Timman has written a preview, weighing the contestants' chances. An interview with Caruana the day after he qualified for the match by winning the Candidates tournament sheds light on his cold-bloodedness and fighting spirit. And in another interview, Sergey Karjakin, Carlsen's previous opponent in New York, explains how special it is to play for the world title and what he expects from the upcoming match.

And there is a fine selection of memorable games between Carlsen and Caruana that you can easily play through with the interactive chess viewer. Starting from their very first encounter, their games have featured prominently in New In Chess. The comments in this selection are by Carlsen ('I couldn't wait to torture him in the endgame'), Caruana ('Although Magnus was playing relatively quickly, I couldn't understand the point behind his play'), and Carlsen's second Peter Heine Nielsen and his first trainer Simen Agdestein.

This and more will give you a taste of New In Chess. And if you're not a subscriber yet, you are more than welcome to join our readers from 116 countries around the world.

In fact, this may be an excellent moment, because the latest issue, which has just come out, has more to say about the match: a preview by our columnist (and official match commentator) Judit Polgar, an extensive profile of the Challenger, and expert tips by Maxim Dlugy in case the match will be decided by blitz games.

Dirk Jan ten Geuzendam
Editor-in-Chief

JAN TIMMAN

Carlsen-Caruana
Who will win?

Since their first encounter in 2010, Magnus Carlsen and Fabiano Caruana have played 33 classical games. The Norwegian is leading 10-5 with 18 draws. **JAN TIMMAN** looks at the strengths (and weaknesses) of the World Champion and his Challenger on the eve of their 12-game title match in London.

It used to be completely normal for World Championship matches to be contested by the two strongest players in the world. There is no shortage of examples: Botvinnik-Smyslov, Fischer-Spassky and, of course, the Karpov-Kasparov matches. In the last few years, things have been different, however. Magnus Carlsen had to play Vishy Anand and Sergey Karjakin, both absolute top players, but not the numbers two in the world at that time. With Fabiano Caruana as the new challenger, the old tradition has been restored. In London, we will witness a dignified battle between the numbers one and two in the world rankings.

Four years ago, Caruana started the Sinquefield Cup with 7 out of 7, beating Carlsen with Black. His rating skyrocketed to 2851, 12 points above Carlsen's current rating. In 1982, I had a conversation about Elo ratings with Russian top grandmaster Efim Geller. In halting English he explained that someone's rating said much more about a player's form than about his or her playing strength. Interestingly enough, Carlsen, Caruana and Aronian all hit their highest-ever rating in 2014, well above the 2800 mark. Of the three, only Carlsen managed to maintain his form in the years that followed. Levon Aronian's traumatic failure to do so in the various Candidates tournaments continued to block his way to the top.

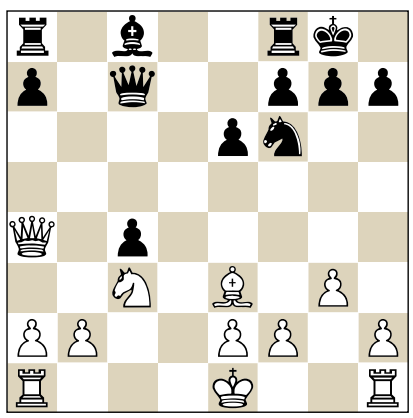
Caruana fared better, but in 2016, in the Candidates tournament in Moscow, he fell just short of clinching the challenger spot. This January, when he had a poor performance in Wijk aan Zee, many people wrote him off as a candidate for the highest title. I myself nevertheless regarded Caruana as one of the favourites in the Berlin Candidates. His solid and highly professional approach to the game simply had to bear fruit at some point, and he made a glorious success of the tournament by winning it a full point ahead of the pack.

This gave Caruana wings, because he went on to win the Grenke Classic in Baden-Baden and Norway Chess in Stavanger ahead of Carlsen and then shared first place in the Sinquefield Cup in St. Louis with Aronian and Carlsen. A good example of the careful planning of his play is the following game.

Fabiano Caruana
Hikaru Nakamura
St. Louis Sinquefield Cup 2018 (4)
Queen's Gambit Declined

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 d5 4.♘c3 ♗e7 5.g3 dxc4 6.♗g2 0-0 7.♘e5 ♘c6 8.♗xc6 bxc6 9.♘xc6 ♕e8 10.♘xe7+ ♕xe7 11.♕a4 c5 12.dxc5 ♕xc5 13.♗e3 ♕c7

‘With Fabiano Caruana as the new challenger, the old tradition has been restored. In London, we will witness a dignified battle between the numbers one and two in the world rankings.’



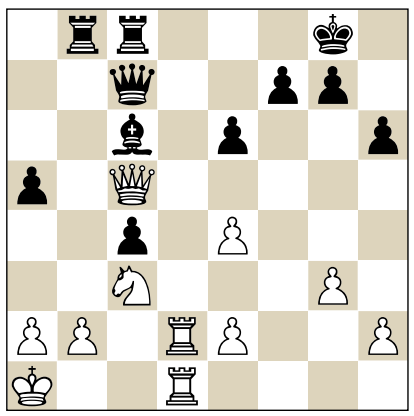
Nakamura had had this position twice in the last few years.

14.0-0-0 An amazing new idea. To my knowledge, no one has ever castled queenside in the Catalan, and if it did happen, the consequences for White must have been dire. Here, the white king is relatively safe on the queenside. The usual alternatives were 14.♖d1, as in Wei Yi-Nakamura, Bilbao 2016, and 14.0-0, as in Svidler-Nakamura, Palma de Mallorca 2017.

14...♘g4 There’s nothing particularly wrong with this knight sortie, except that after the swap on e3, White has the easier game. The alternative was 14...♗b7, after which the game might continue as follows: 15.f3 ♘d5 16.♗d4 a5 17.♖d2 ♖fc8, with roughly equal chances.

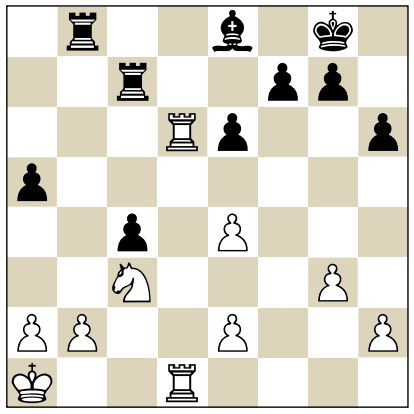
15.♖d2 ♘xe3 16.fxe3 ♖b8 17.♖hd1 a5 18.♔b1 h6 19.♔a1 ♖b4 20.♕c2 ♖b8 21.♕e4 ♗b7 22.♕d4 ♗a8 23.e4 ♖fc8 24.♕f2 ♗c6 25.♕c5

Caruana has manoeuvred in such a way that Black is now forced to allow a queen swap or sacrifice his c-pawn.



25...♗e8 He goes for the first option. There wasn’t much against 25...♕b7; after 26.♕xc4 ♗e8 27.♕d4 a4 Black will have just enough compensation for the pawn.

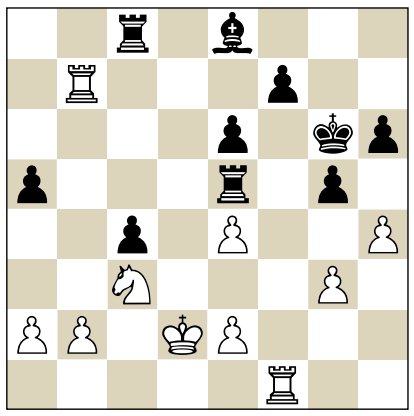
26.♕xc7 ♖xc7 27.♖d6



27...♔f8 All moves had minor drawbacks. 27...♖a8, for example, would have been met by 28.♖d8.

28.♖a6 Putting pressure on the black position.

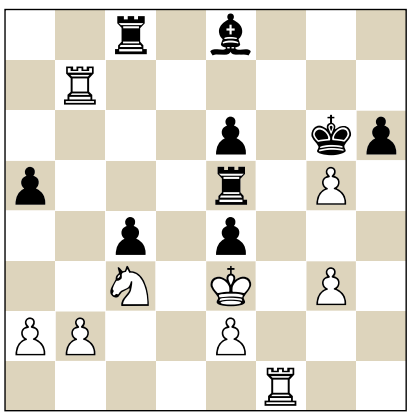
28...♖c5 29.♖a7 ♖bc8 30.♔b1 ♖h5 31.h4 ♖e5 32.♔c2 g5 33.♖f1 ♔g7 34.♖b7 ♔g6 35.♔d2



LENNART OOTES

Rex and Jeanne Sinquefield with the Sinquefield Cup and the three winners of the 2018 edition: Fabiano Caruana, Magnus Carlsen and Levon Aronian.

35...f5?
Up to this point, Nakamura had defended well, but the text is a serious error. Black had no reason to panic. After 35...♖ec5 36.♔e3 ♖8c7, White would find it difficult to make progress. Black has a solid defence.
36.hxg5 fxe4
Or 36...hxg5 37.♖h1 fxe4 38.♔e3, and White is reigning supreme.
37.♔e3
The king will still block the e4-pawn. Caruana now converts this position in impressive fashion.



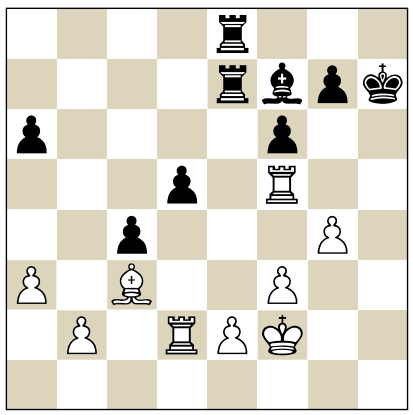
37...♗c6 38.♖e7 ♖xg5 39.♖xe6+ ♔g7 40.♖e7+ ♔g6 41.♖d1 ♔f6 42.♖a7 ♔e6 43.♖h1 h5 44.g4 ♗e8 45.gxh5 ♗xh5 46.♘xe4 ♖f5 47.♖a6+ ♔e7 48.♘d6 ♖e5+ 49.♔d4
Black resigned.

Afterwards, Caruana said that his novelty was only meant for this game, suggesting that he had an entire arsenal of opening weapons to draw on.

Winning 'out of nothing'

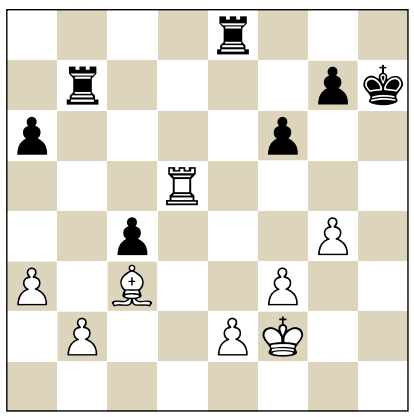
Carlsen found it hard to find his best form this year. In Biel it was still a bit of a struggle for him, but in St. Louis he managed to hit reasonable form, twice managing to win 'out of nothing', one of his specialties.

Magnus Carlsen
Sergey Karjakin
St. Louis Sinquefield Cup 2018 (2)



position after 36.♖f5

White has a slight plus, but it seems unlikely that it will lead to anything.
36...♖b7
Relieving the pressure on the white e-pawn and allowing White to make a positional exchange sacrifice. After 36...♔h6, White can play 37.♗d4 and then go e2-e3 and activate the d2-rook on the kingside.
37.♖fxd5
Eminently practical. With the weak black queenside pawns and a strongly positioned bishop, White is risking nothing with the exchange sacrifice.
37...♗xd5 38.♖xd5



38...♔g6
Karjakin rather fails to live up to his nickname of 'Minister of Defence'. There was nothing against 38...♖c8 or 38...♖c7 to keep the c-pawn. The a-pawn can be protected by the other rook.
39.♖c5 ♖h8 40.♔g3 ♖b6 41.♖xc4 ♖h1 42.♖c7 ♖c1 43.♖d7 ♖c6 44.a4 ♖g1+ 45.♔f2 ♖a1 46.a5 ♖a4 47.♔g3 ♖ac4

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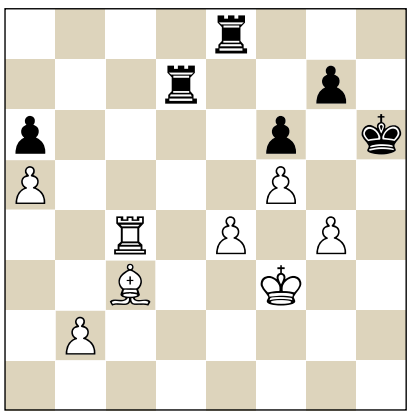
BIEL CHESS FESTIVAL

Biel 2011. On the eve of the annual Chess Festival, world number one Magnus Carlsen answered questions from the Swiss press.

48.♖a7 ♖e6 49.e4 ♖c8 50.♖d7 ♖ec6 51.f4 ♖8c7 52.f5+ ♔h7 53.♖d8 ♖c8 54.♖d3 ♖e8 55.♖d4 ♖c7 56.♔f4 ♖ce7 57.♖c4 ♔h6 58.♔f3 ♖d7

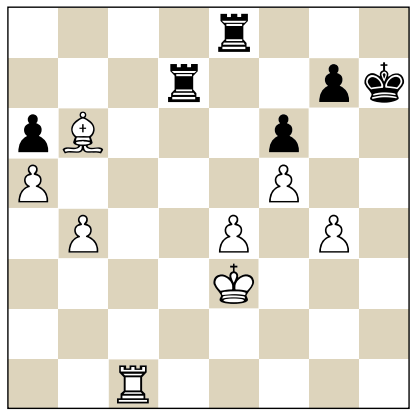


59.♗d4 Carlsen hesitates just after decisively reinforcing his position. The breakthrough 59.e5! would have been winning. After 59...fxe5 (59...♔g5 60.e6 ♖d3+ 61.♔e2 and 59...♖d3+ 60.♔f4 are insufficient for Black as well) 60.♖c6+ ♔g5 61.♖g6+ ♔h4 62.f6!, the black king will be caught in a mating net.

59...♔h7 60.b4

Better would have been withdrawing the bishop with 60.♗c3 and going for the advance of the e-pawn regardless.

60...♖d6 61.♔e3 ♔h6 62.♖c1 ♔h7 63.♗b6 ♖d7

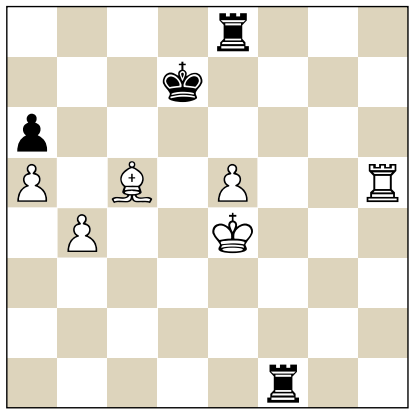


Now the worst is past for Black.

64.♗c5 ♖ed8 65.♖h1+ ♔g8 66.♔f4 ♖e8

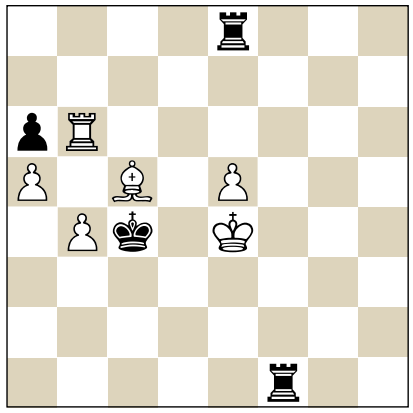
66...♖d1 was also enough to draw. Black needn't fear the rook swap.

67.♖e1 g5+ 68.fxg6 ♔g7 69.g5 ♔xg6 70.gxf6 ♔xf6 71.♖h1 ♖f7 72.♔e3 ♔e6 73.♖h4 ♖f6 74.♖h7 ♖f7 75.♖h5 ♔d7 76.e5 ♖f1 77.♔e4



77...♔c6? A terrible mistake. After 77...♖e1+ or 77...♖e6 Black could have survived easily.

78.♖h6+ ♔b5 79.♖b6+ ♔c4



80.e6

Karjakin must have overlooked this simple move. The e-pawn decides the issue.

80...♖e1+ 81.♔f5 ♖f1+ 82.♔e5 ♖e1+ 83.♔f6 ♖f1+ 84.♔g7 ♖a8 85.e7 ♖e1 86.♔f7 ♖e4 87.♖d6 ♖h8 88.♖xa6

Black resigned.

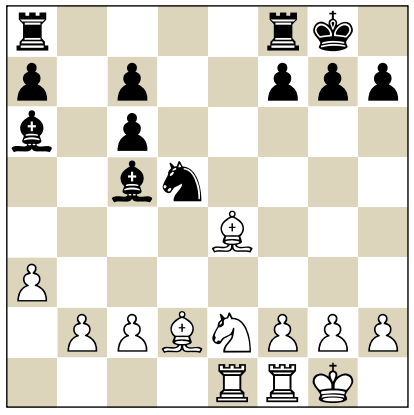
A good endgame, but the hesitation on move 59 clearly indicated that Carlsen was not in top form.

Newcomer

Going by the players' form, you could say that Caruana is slightly more favourite to win. But this is set off by the fact that Carlsen has a clearly better score in their personal duels: 10-5, with 18 draws. They played their first game in Wijk aan Zee in 2010. Carlsen was White and it ended in a draw, which must have a slight disappointment for him. He is 18 months older than Caruana and made his breakthrough to the world top much earlier. Caruana was a newcomer at that point. A year later, Carlsen did manage to defeat his rival.

Magnus Carlsen
Fabiano Caruana
Biel 2011 (4)
Scotch Game

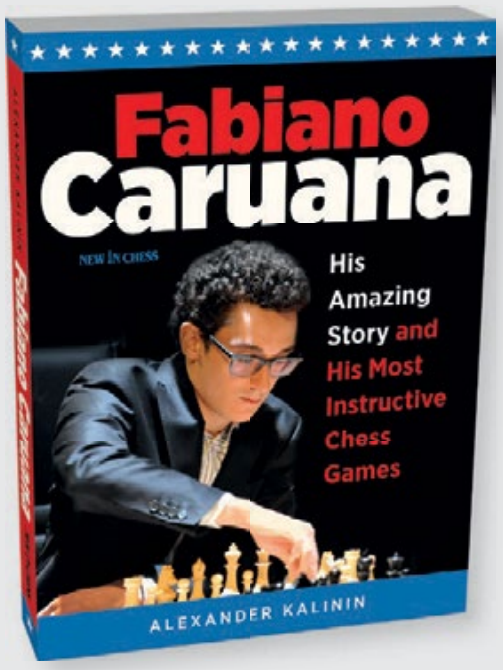
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 exd4 4.♘xd4 ♗c5 5.♘xc6 bxc6 6.♗d3 ♕h4 7.♕e2 ♘e7 8.♘c3 0-0 9.♗e3 ♗b6 10.0-0 d5 11.exd5 ♘xd5 12.♗d2 ♗d4 13.♖ae1 ♘b4 14.♕e4 ♕xe4 15.♗xe4 ♗a6 16.♘e2 ♗c5 17.a3 ♘d5



White has the better structure on the queenside, but Black has the more active pieces. Carlsen now aims for a strategic exchange sacrifice.

18.b4 ♗d6

More accurate was 18...♖fe8, intending 19.♗f3 ♗f8 20.♘d4 ♗xf1 21.♖xf1 a6 22.♘xc6 ♘f6, and the chances are equal.



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Carl Portman, author of Chess Behind Bars

"The games are well-annotated offering variations where needed, but also plenty of explanatory prose. Kalinin presents two smooth victories by Fabiano in [the Berlin Defence] (including a win over Carlsen) that illustrate his principled and crisp play quite nicely and suggest the World Championship match this fall should be something special."
International Master John Donaldson

"I liked the book, as I like Caruana. But I hope Magnus will win!"
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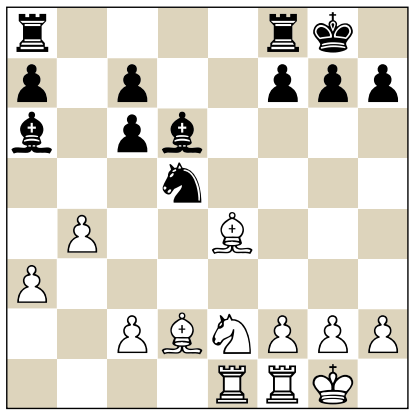
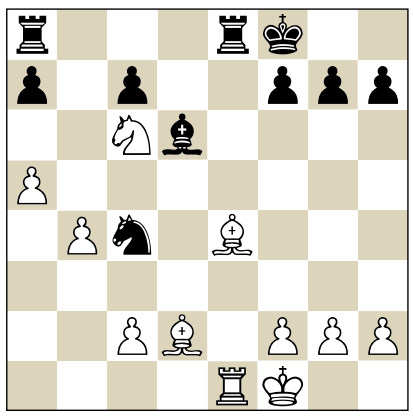
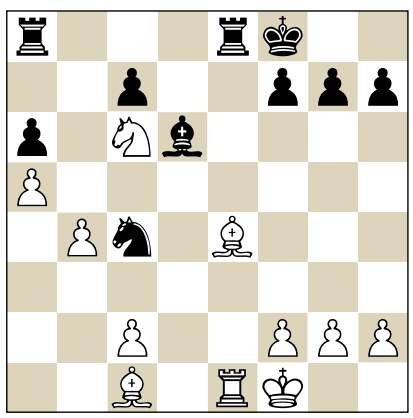


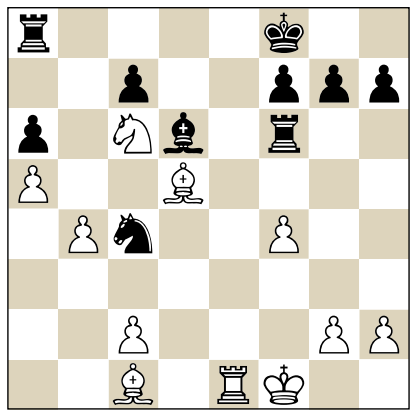
19.♘d4!
The point of the previous move.
19...♗xf1 20.♔xf1 ♘b6 21.♘xc6 ♖fe8 22.a4 ♔f8 23.a5 ♘c4



24.♗c1
The wrong square. With 24.♗c3, White could have kept his plus. Carlsen may have been afraid of 24...♗f4, but after 25.♗d5 ♗d2! 26.♖d1! ♗xc3 27.♗xc4 ♖e4 28.♗d5 ♖h4 29.♖d3!, Black cannot take the b-pawn, allowing White to maintain his strong grip on the queenside.
24...a6
With 24...f5 Black could have restored equality, e.g. 25.♗xf5 ♖xe1+ 26.♔xe1 ♖e8+ 27.♔f1 ♘e5 28.♗e4 ♘xc6 29.♗xc6 ♖d8, and White has nothing.



25.f4 A very strong strategic move, to take away the crucial square e5 from the black knight. But it has a tactical downside. Objectively speaking, 25.c3, to maintain the tension, would have been better.
25...♖e6?
The only way out was 25...♘e3+!. After 26.♖xe3 ♗xf4 27.♖f3 ♗xc1 28.♗d5 f6 the position is equal.
26.♗d5 ♖f6

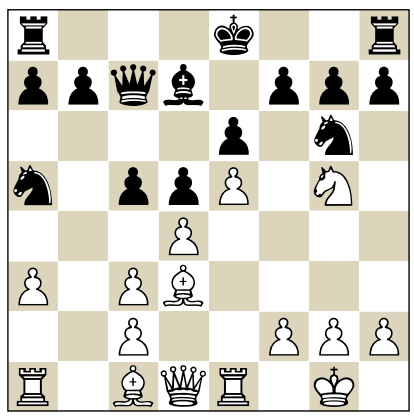


27.♖e4 Winning the knight. Black resigned.

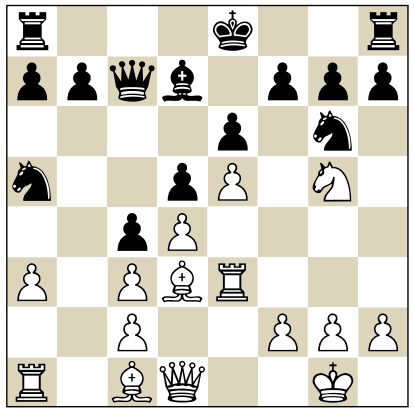
An interesting battle in which both players missed the mark a few times in the critical phase. The three subsequent duels ended in draws. Then it was Caruana's turn to strike, although the game was not one of the best.

Fabiano Caruana
Magnus Carlsen
Sao Paulo/Bilbao 2012 (1)
French Defence, Winawer Variation

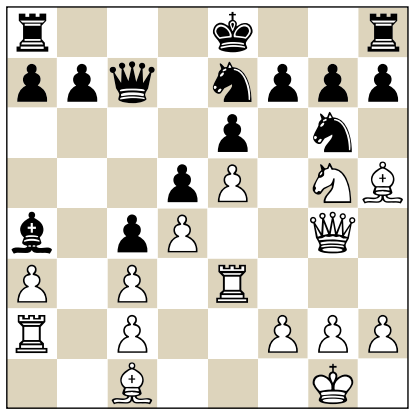
1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.e5 c5 5.a3 ♗xc3+ 6.bxc3 ♘e7 7.♘f3 ♘bc6 8.♗d3 ♗d7 9.0-0 ♕c7 10.♖e1 ♘a5 11.♘g5 ♘g6



Carlsen has played his queen's knight to a5 too early, exposing his king.
12.♖e3! The signal for the attack.
12...c4
What else?



13.♗e2
Not vigorous enough. 13.♗xg6 hxg6 14.♕g4 would have yielded White a winning attack. The crucial variation is 14...f5 (after 14...♗a4 15.♖f3, he could no longer defend his f-pawn) 15.exf6 ♕xh2+ 16.♔f1, and Black has achieved nothing; he cannot prevent White from making a deadly capture on e6.
13...♘c6 14.♗h5 ♘ce7 15.♕g4 ♗a4 16.♖a2
This timid protecting move throws away the white initiative. Stronger was the principled 16.♖f3, with the point of 16...♘f5 17.♕h3 ♗xc2 18.♘xe6, and White is better.



16...♘f5
This move solves all Black's defensive problems. It was followed by a lengthy manoeuvring phase in which Carlsen managed to outplay his rival. I pick up the thread again far into the endgame.
17.♖e1 0-0-0 18.♘f3 ♔b8 19.h4 ♖df8 20.♕h3 ♘ge7 21.♕h2 h6

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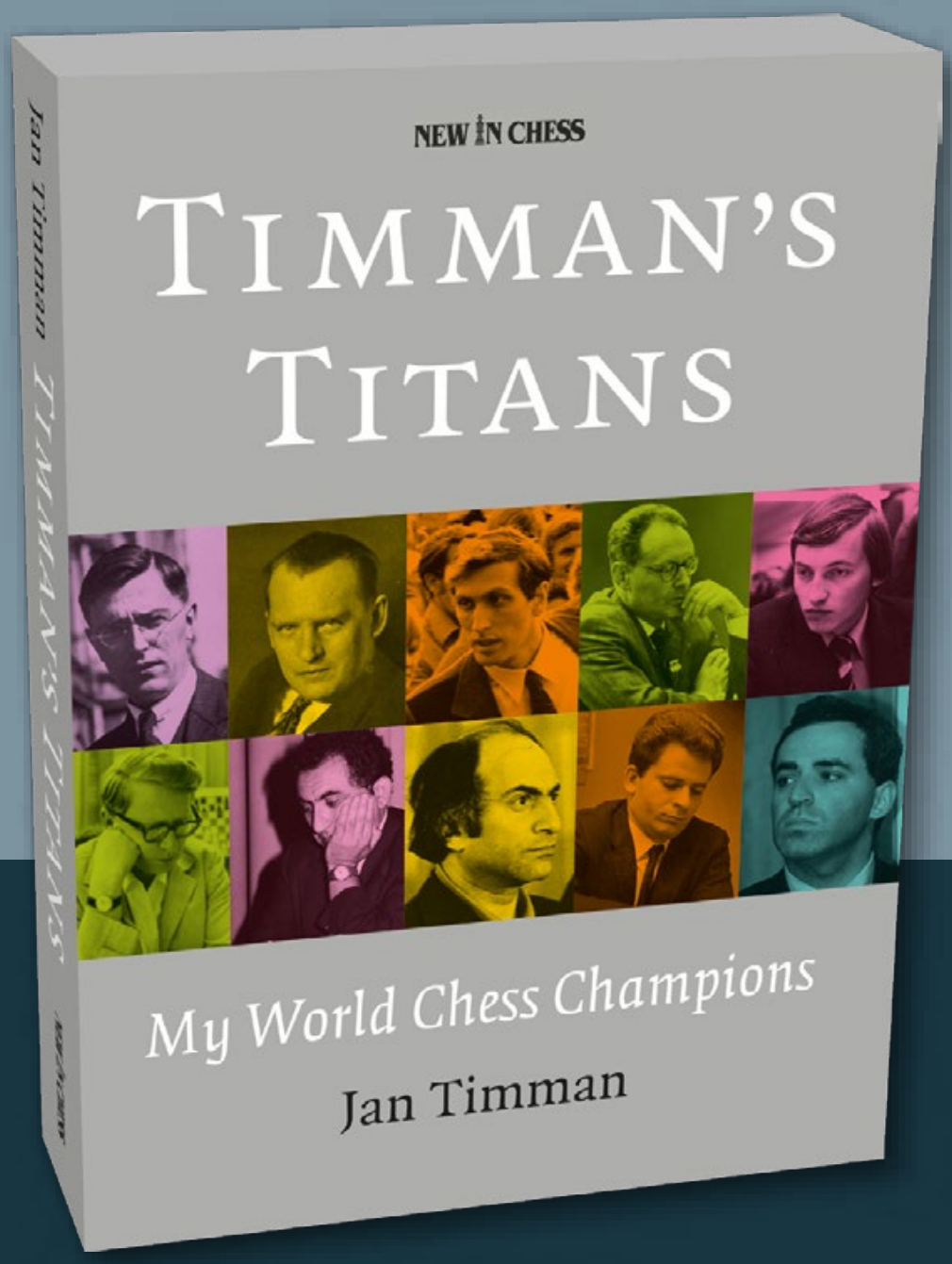

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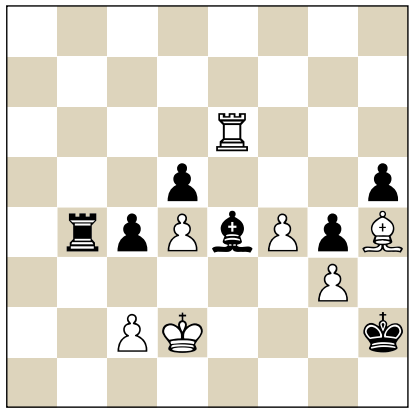
22.♗g4 g5 23.h5 ♘g7 24.♘d2 f5 25.exf6 ♕xh2+ 26.♔xh2 ♖xf6 27.♗f3 ♖hf8 28.♘f1 ♘ef5 29.♗g4 ♗e8 30.♗xf5 ♘xf5 31.♘e3 ♘xe3 32.♗xe3 ♗xh5 33.♔g3 ♗g6 34.♖b2 h5 35.f3 g4 36.♗g5 ♖f5 37.f4 ♖e8 38.♖e2 ♔c7 39.♖b1 ♖f7 40.♖h1 ♖h7 41.♔f2 ♔b6 42.g3 ♔a5 43.♔e3 ♗f5 44.♔d2 ♖c8 45.♗h4 ♖d7 46.♖b1 ♖c6 47.♖ee1 ♖b6 48.♖xb6 ♔xb6 49.♖b1+ ♔c7 50.♔c1 ♖d6 51.♔b2 ♖b6+ 52.♔c1 ♖a6 53.♔b2 ♗e4 54.♗g5 ♔d7 55.♗h4 ♔e8 56.♔a2 b6 57.♔b2 ♔f7 58.♖e1 b5 59.♖b1 ♔g6 60.♖e1 ♔f7 61.♖a1 ♖b6 62.♖b1 ♔g6 63.♔c1 ♖a6 64.♔b2 ♔f5 65.♖e1 ♖b6 66.♖b1 a5 67.♔c1 ♗g2 68.♔d2 ♔e4 69.♖e1+ ♔f3 70.♖e2 b4 71.axb4 axb4 72.♖e3+ ♔f2 73.♖e2+ ♔f3 74.♖e3+ ♔f2 75.♖e2+ ♔g1 76.♖e1+ ♔h2 77.cxb4 ♖xb4 78.♖xe6 ♗e4



The material has thinned out, but the white position is still hard to defend.

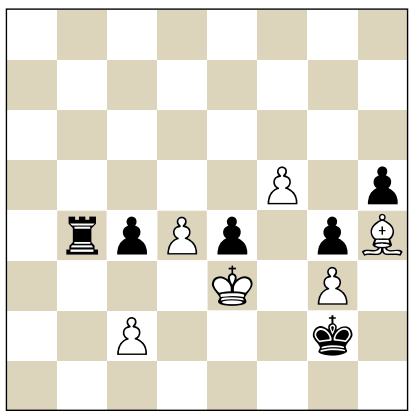
79.♖xe4!?

Now it is Caruana's turn to sacrifice an exchange! The sacrifice is objectively incorrect, however, and a better defence for White would have been 79.♔c1. In practice it is not easy for Black, though, mainly because his king is still far from the action.

79...dxe4 80.f5 ♔g2

Bad timing! It is understandable that Black wants to get his king closer, but he should have strengthened its position first. Winning was 80...♖b1, to meet 81.f6 (after 81.♔e3 Black plays 81...♖e1+) with 81...♔g2. White is powerless. The curious 80...♖b2, incidentally, would also have been sufficient for the win. The white king is kept away from e3, and after 81.f6, Black again decides the issue with 81...♔g2.

81.♔e3



81...♖b2?

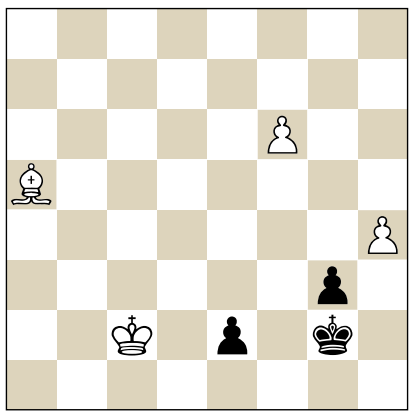
But given the changed situation, this rook move precipitates Black's defeat! With 81...♖b1 Black could have scraped to a draw, e.g. 82.♔xe4 ♖c1 83.d5 ♖xc2 84.d6 ♖e2+ 85.♔d5 c3 86.♗g5 ♖f2 87.♔e5 ♖e2+, and neither player can make progress.

The surprising 81...♖b3+ 82.♔xe4 ♖c3 would have worked as well.

82.d5

The d-pawn has suddenly become unstoppable.

82...♖xc2 83.d6 c3 84.d7 ♖d2 85.d8♕ ♖xd8 86.♗xd8 h4 87.gxh4 g3 88.f6 c2 89.♔d2 e3+ 90.♔xc2 e2 91.♗a5



Stopping the e-pawn, after which the road for the white f-pawn is clear.

Black resigned.

Three years drought

Both these games were won by White, but the first-move advantage hardly played a part in their duels: in 33 games, White only scored one more win. This allows for the tentative conclusion that opening preparation is not so all-important in personal duels; many games were decided in the middlegame phase. Another interesting statistic: of the 15 games following Caruana's first win only four were drawn. Carlsen won seven, Caruana four. Such a sharp score is rare between two absolute top players.

It would be fantastic, of course, if the London match also produced only four draws, but such optimism may be unwarranted. In the two years after the above games, things already looked different: all their games, six of them in total, were drawn. This year, Carlsen won twice, while four more draws were added to their tally. This means that Caruana has not beaten the World Champion for three years, while in two other games he barely managed to hang on to a draw.

This is not necessarily bad for Caruana. Miraculous escapes are a measure of a player's motivation and pugnacity, and indirectly point to good form. In this context, it is interesting to look at what Carlsen said in a recent interview with Tarjei Svensen:

'I've long felt that Caruana had the strength to be almost on my level, but he hasn't been stable enough. This year, he has been very stable and that got him to close in on rating and qualifying for a match that will be very tough.' A respectful comment from the World Champion. And it's a fair bet that it will be a match in which the sparks will fly.

There is a concrete reason why I think that Carlsen will have a slight advantage: he is better in games with a faster time-control. It goes without saying that this will help in case of a tie-break, but it will also enable a player to play top-level chess more easily on his off-days. It is not a substantial advantage, however. ■

Interview Fabiano Caruana

(First published in New In Chess 2018/3)

With his goal in sight, his nerves got the better of him. Suddenly he lost a game, and victory in the Candidates tournament was threatening to slip through his fingers. Time to show his true mettle. Fabiano Caruana kicked himself, went to see *The Shape of Water* and bounced back with two final wins to earn the right to challenge Magnus Carlsen for the world title. The next day, the American Challenger looked back on his greatest success to date in an interview with **DIRK JAN TEN GEUZENDAM.**

‘I took pretty much all my chances’

When I meet Fabiano Caruana at the Scandic Hotel in the centre of Berlin, which has been his home for three weeks, he looks calm as always. He must be very pleased, thrilled, perhaps still jumping for joy inside, but if so, he doesn’t show it. Sure, he was happy to have a small celebration with some friends last night, but nothing extravagant. And no, he didn’t go to sleep at a crazy hour. Also because he had to get up in time to start a long session of interviews.

In fact, now that he has won the Candidates tournament, something that he had wanted so much, he doesn’t look very different from how he looked when I talked to him two years ago after he had finished second in the Moscow Candidates after a last-round loss to Sergey Karjakin. There I suggested that he must be devastated, a suggestion he laconically denied, saying he was fine and that there would be a next time. As we sit down in a quiet corner of the restaurant on the third floor of the Scandic, I remind him of that conversation and tell him that I still can’t believe that at that point he was so laid-back.

‘Yeah, I was a little bit more laid-back last time. This time I really wanted to win it, and I almost felt as if I was putting too much pressure on myself at some point. Although if I had not won, there would still have been a next time. It’s not as if my career would be over.’

What did you do after Moscow? Make a structured plan to reach the world title match in 2018? Let’s do everything right now?

‘No, I can’t say I did everything right. I made a lot of mistakes. It was important that it was the second time, which is always very different. It’s like, take Ding Liren, who played so well here, but should have pushed a bit more. Next time he will probably have that extra push and maybe that

‘It probably helps that I have been beaten down so many times in my chess career that I am ready to get hit again.’

LENNART OOTES

will take him to the top. You just never know. It's always a slightly different feeling at your first time, when you kind of cannot fully believe that you are able to win it. Maybe that was what happened last time. I did everything right, I fought as well as I could, but in a few critical moments I just didn't have what it takes. This time I guess I did. I missed, I'd say, one big chance, against Ding Liren, but otherwise I took pretty much all my chances. I was much more experienced than two years ago. I was a relatively experienced player at the top back then, but now I had two extra years and a lot of failures and a lot of successes as well. And recently I had been playing well, been feeling good about my chess. I had two very important victories at the end of last year. OK, then Wijk aan Zee was a terrible tournament, but that happens sometimes. Every once in a while, you have a disaster where you get a huge minus score and you can't do anything right, but it didn't really affect my play here.'

It's tempting to believe that you were hiding in Wijk aan Zee...
'(Immediately) No, I wasn't hiding anything. Things just didn't go right from the start, and at that point you lose motivation, especially in a long tournament like Wijk aan Zee.'

You weren't staying away from certain openings?
'Not really. I mean, to be honest I didn't even know what I would prepare at that point, and I had some slightly chaotic preparation before Berlin. I played some stuff here which was probably not the most dangerous prep of all time. Queen b3 in all the lines of the Catalan. But still it kind of worked perfectly, because I won one game at the start with it and then almost another. I certainly wasn't hiding prep in Wijk aan Zee, and I didn't want to do badly. But I quickly forgot about it. I don't know, I thought there is a main challenge. OK, it wasn't great, but two years ago, I did very well in Wijk and that didn't mean that I won the Candidates. Karjakin did very poorly in Wijk that year and he won the Candidates. It doesn't really mean anything.'

What were the main changes in your life over the past two years?
'I went through some relationships since, like, 2016. That, I would say, is the main thing. And I also went through some business changes. Lawrence Trent was my manager, and of course I was very grateful for all the help he gave me, and that ended. Obviously I have a personal relationship with all the people I work with, so this is also part of my personal life. I was trying to find the right approach and my new manager was Rhonda Coleman. We worked together for a year, and then that ended and now I am being represented by two people, Eric Kuhn and Mehreen Malik, who are not really known in the chess world. They are very capable and very supportive. They have a lot of connections in the world, in terms of media, in terms of companies, clients, things like that. They are trying their best to get my name out there and see what they can do. And I think they are doing a good job. I mean, I also hope that I maybe helped their job a bit (laughs) with this tournament.'

I remember that a couple of years ago, people around you urged you to be more active on social platforms, and I thought, but that's not Fabiano. I couldn't see you tweet every day... And you didn't.
'I still don't. Sometimes I feel the urge to tweet something. At some point, I had this social media company that was handling my social media accounts, but it didn't quite work out. Also because they messed a few things up (laughs) and posted things which weren't quite true or which were just flat-out mistakes. Like once they said my favourite song was *Kashmir* (by Led Zeppelin), but they spelled it Cashmere. And then I got so many messages telling me how it should be spelled. But now I handle all the stuff myself, which is nice. Also, I took a break during this tournament, because my phone account had a devastating life-ending glitch. So I was phoneless for the last month and a half, which was actually a good thing. But when I get home I will get myself a new phone.'

If Kashmir is your favourite Led Zeppelin song, I'd like to know your numbers two and three.
'I am not even sure it's my favourite. I'd probably put *Achilles' Last Stand* up there. But *Kashmir* is definitely up there, too. And the third one, I don't really know, maybe *Black Dog*. I like some of their earlier stuff too, like *Good Times, Bad Times*.'

We talked about your disappointing result in Wijk aan Zee. What did you do in the month between Wijk aan Zee and Berlin?
'First I went home for about 10 days. I was alone, I tried to get into good shape. Because obviously after a tournament you are not in the best physical shape and you're also tired. I tried to regain my energy. And then I went to Miami, where I was joined by Rustam (Kasimdzhanov), obviously, and also by Cristian Chirila and Leinier Dominguez for the entirety of it. We worked together, and near the end Alejandro Ramirez came for three, four days and he also helped out. We kind of chilled out and worked on chess for a good part of 15, 16 days. It was nice. Miami in February is actually the place to be.'

That was at the place that you have there?
'No, no, my place was rented out, so we just rented an Airbnb. An older house, but a very large one, perfect, and we could go to the beach. We had plenty of room even for five people.'

Several of them are from St. Louis, where you are living now. Do you have a contract with the Club or with Rex Sinquefield...
'I don't think I can really say anything

about that. But the Club does support me in any way they can, and this is invaluable help.'

And the details you might divulge in the future...
'I don't think so. I mean, the Saint Louis Chess Club is supportive of all American players and they are also equally supportive of me, so I also hope that I can make them proud, for instance with this tournament victory.'

Did you get a message from Rex Sinquefield?
'Actually, I haven't gotten an email from him. After I won London he sent me an email. But I have the feeling that I get a lot of text messages that I can't see, which is kind of an issue. So maybe once I get a new phone, I will be able to check them all.'

When you came here, you were ready for a long battle. Did it help that you had been through such a long gruelling event before?
'Yeah, I was prepared for the same thing as last time; a very long fight in which you shouldn't try to go crazy from the start. We actually saw that players who did badly at the start, suddenly were in contention again. Like Sergey (Karjakin), who had the most disastrous start you could imagine and then led the tournament two rounds before the end. We have seen this on many occasions. I think some of my recent tournaments have helped me get ready for the tension and the stress of it. But the stress did get to me at some point, which resulted in a few poorly played games, especially this game against Sergey in Round 12, where I just got completely outplayed and beaten without a single chance. It was really critical that I pulled myself together after this loss.'

You are a fighter and you know that only the strong will survive. Is it also something you enjoy? (Seeing his hesitation) I mean, some people hate battles, some people love battles...
'I think if you are not ready for a fight you have no chance to win this tournament.'

But you should also enjoy the pain...
'Oh, I definitely don't enjoy the pain (laughs). But I am ready to forget about it and move on to the next game, which I guess is a very helpful quality. It probably helps that I have been beaten down so many times in my chess career that I am ready to get hit again. And I was hit in this tournament, obviously.

MARIA EMELIANOVA

'If you are not ready for a fight you have no chance to win this tournament.'

It's not every time that I recover from a loss, but this time I did it (in the last two rounds) and even more than I needed to. That was great. But I was helped a lot by some luck. That I got my prep against Levon (Aronian) in Round 13, that I won this game. Because otherwise I would have been in a must-win situation the final round and who knows I might have lost that game. But you need some luck to win the Candidates. I don't think you can do without. Magnus (starts laughing), when he won in London in 2013, had pretty much all the luck in the world. Only maybe Vishy (Anand) in 2014 kind of did it just through pure strength over his competitors alone. Although even there I can remember a few lucky moments.'

A key moment early on in the tournament was your game against Kramnik in Round 4, full of ups and downs, which gave you a boost and clearly affected him. How did you experience that rollercoaster?
'The thing was that I couldn't get too upset. At some point, I realized that I had messed up the position completely, but I didn't have time to think about it, because we already had a new position, which was complicated and where I had to fight. Then I made this ...h5 move, which was absolutely necessary and a very good practical chance. Probably my most important move of the game. And then I was winning, but it's not like it was automatic. At the end of the game, I made some good moves and that was necessary.'

Did you manage to keep your calm in that game?
'Not really. I mean, I can't say I kept my calm when I messed up a winning position. I was too low on time, and after the time-control I also wasn't sure, but at least I had more time than him; that was very important. At some point, I offered a draw, with a bad move, which was a strange decision, but probably what ultimately won me the game. Rustam really enjoyed this a lot. Me playing a bad move and then offering a draw. That's really something you don't see every day. Maybe if I had offered a draw with another move, he would have taken it, who knows. Although I have a feeling that Kramnik will not take a draw in any position these days.'

Most of the time when I was observing you here, you looked confident and calm. But then you tend to confuse me, as you once told me that you were different from other people. That others might hide their nervousness, but that when you look nervous you are not.
'But this time I was actually very nervous. For most of the tournament I wasn't, but I was very nervous before my game against Shakhriyar (Mamedyarov), and I think it showed in some

of my decisions at the start of the game. And against Kramnik, and obviously against Karjakin. In these three games my stress just hit a level that was unsustainable, and after I lost against Karjakin it relieved some of the stress somehow, which was necessary.'

This stress builds up before you go to the game...
'It's before the game, preparing the night before. Sometimes you struggle with sleep as well, which isn't great. Usually I have no problems sleeping during tournaments, but around this period I was waking up earlier than I normally do. This was a tough period in the tournament, probably the toughest. And it ended with a loss and for whatever reasons things got easier.'

What is it that you try to do to release the tension?
'You try your best, you try to go out, walk and enjoy the fresh air, watch a movie or play some video games, something to take your mind off chess, but there is always something in the back of your mind. It's a very useful skill to actually be able to forget about chess after the games, which I generally have, but sometimes it betrays me.'

After the loss in Round 12 against Karjakin, at the post-game press conference, you looked groggy, like a boxer who was suddenly hit by a blow he had not seen coming in a fight he believed to have under control.
'When we faced the time-trouble phase, I realized that I had landed in the most hopeless position that I could imagine. I also saw that Shakhriyar (Mamedyarov) had lost and I started wondering how all this could happen. Because all I needed was a draw and I would be a clear point in the lead and I could pretty much coast in my last two games.'

Essentially you lost one and a half points in that one game against Karjakin, because in case of a tie with him the tiebreak rules would favour him now.
'Yeah, the tiebreak was ruined by that loss... But also I would have been a point ahead, and if my last two games were drawn someone had to actually win both games on demand, which is a colossal task. So yeah, it was very unpleasant and I started wondering how I had managed to screw it all up so badly. I kicked myself for a few hours and then I managed to get to sleep and forget about it.'

The next day was a free day and you went to see The Shape of Water. Rather than go to an action-packed movie you went to a different world temporarily...
'Yeah, that was a good idea. Friends had been telling me about it months before, you have to see this, and I didn't get a chance. And we're here in the centre of Berlin and there is a movie theatre close by, so why not? It was also a really-well made film, so it gave me a good feeling and I could forget about everything for a couple of hours.'

One thing nobody could fail to notice in this Candidates tournament were the unbelievable fights, people throwing everything at each other. A more common strategy might have been for most players to proceed cautiously and to try and grab their chances to slowly build up a plus score. What was happening here?
'That's what I was trying; I was not going crazy or anything. But what can you do when you're playing Kramnik? The game takes an unexpected turn, no matter what.'

Maybe you were trying that approach, but there were various players that weren't. There was such mayhem, how do you explain that?
'Well, players play according to their style. I don't think you can tell a player to play calmly, quietly. If it's going against his style it's not going to be good for him. So Kramnik plays the way he feels he needs to. It's his approach to chess these days and it's just as legitimate as...'

I didn't feel Aronian was playing the way he was playing in previous tournaments.
'Levon is such an enterprising player and sometimes it works out beautifully and sometimes it doesn't. But he also made some bad decisions. His decision to play 1.e4 against Kramnik was a critically awful decision. I think he will agree. Because if he had played a normal game, it could have been a very different tournament for him.'

What did you think when you saw 1.e4 on his board?
'I was surprised and I remembered that he played 1.e4 against Karjakin in the last round of the Candidates 2014 and it didn't work out for him. Well, he was actually better in that game, so I shouldn't say it didn't work out for him, but he still lost. He is not a natural e4-player, and I thought the line was just strange. He prepared poorly and he ran into, like, the only line in which Black can actually mate White in this opening. And Kramnik was probably shocked that he actually got a chance to use it. And against Levon, of all people.'

Levon Aronian was one of the top favourites, perhaps the top favourite for many people, and he finishes last. Is there any explanation for that or is it just the cruelty of sport?
'I really don't know what went wrong with his play; only he can say that. He was definitely the best player last year in terms of his results. Obviously, Magnus is always consistently good, great even, but Levon won so many tournaments that you cannot say he was not the best player of 2017. It's just bad luck that he comes to this, the most important tournament, not in the same form as he came to, let's say, the World Cup or Norway Chess or any of the tournaments he won last year. But he probably also made some bad decisions. He was fighting, but the thing is, you can either fight or try and limit the damage and you'll end up in fifth place or whatever and it will be one of those unremarkable, bad tournaments.'

Is that the secret of this tournament, that it doesn't make any sense to lick your wounds?
'It doesn't actually make a difference if you're second or if you're in last place. Well, it makes some difference, you don't want to have a bad tournament, no matter what. But he tried and it could have worked out. We saw it almost worked out for Sergey (Karjakin). He tried and he had some luck against Wesley (So), and suddenly he was back in the race. And maybe Levon, with some luck, would have been back in the race too. But instead of having some luck he was just having one bad game after another.'

After your loss to Karjakin in Round 12 you bounced back against Aronian, who walked straight into your prep. That win must have given you a huge boost.
'Yeah, because I suddenly didn't have to win the last round. I didn't have to go out of my way to win. After a draw I definitely would have had to play for a win. I didn't want to repeat the situation of last time, when I had to play an opening that I hate, one that leads to a bad position out of the opening, which I have to first not lose, try to equalize and then try to outplay my opponent. Which is not a pleasant feeling from the start. This way I could just play a normal game. And if somehow I didn't win and Sergey or Shakhriyar found a way to win, that would be bad luck, but it happens. I thought my chances if I drew my last game were going to be very good.'

That was your mind-set before the final round. But once you sat down, it may have been slightly different. To what extent were you following the other games, in which there was so much going on? Players on who you had to count were maybe not spending their time cleverly, taking risks at strange moments...
'I thought that Ding wouldn't lose (against Karjakin), especially after his ...h3. Then I thought he was going to win. I was wondering how Sergey was going to survive this position. I walked by their board right before he played ...h3, and I started wondering, why not ...h3? And Ding also looked confused, and after he played it Sergey started shaking his head, so I figured that he had blundered. It was a bad blunder; he was kind of lucky that it didn't totally spoil his position. So I was only worried at that point about Kramnik's game (against Mamedyarov). Not because I thought he had a bad position, but because anything can happen. He is very ambitious, he is down a pawn, he has a very attractive position, so he could easily push too hard. But then I was in my own time-trouble, didn't see his game, and after move 40 I saw it and it was a draw, so I was happy (smiles).'

And that's the final hurdle. Fabiano Caruana on the cover of New In Chess 2018/3 after he won the Candidates in Berlin.

At the start of our talk I said that I had the feeling that this tournament began for you at the end of the Candidates tournament in Moscow. Here, when you were playing the final part of your game against Grischuk and you could have offered a draw but decided to play on, I was thinking that I was witnessing the beginning of the match against Carlsen. You knew that in this position Magnus would never ever consider offering a draw and neither would you.
'I know Magnus wouldn't consider it, but that wasn't really what I was thinking about. I think if you give this position to Levon or Sergey, Nakamura... I mean, if it's very complicated, then I understand, OK, take a draw and play safe. But the opponent has no counterplay, you have a pawn, the bishop pair, everything is protected, and I am winning. So I saw no risk and I also thought, if I can win the game, I have an obligation to win it. But it's not supposed to be a statement to Magnus or anything.'

Your analysis is quite clinical and makes sense, but it cannot be a coincidence that when I was talking to Judit Polgar after the game, it turned out we had had exactly the same idea. Oh yeah, this is about Magnus. But you don't think it was.
'No, I just thought it was about the position. I don't think anyone could have criticized me if I took the draw, because at the end of the day rating points don't matter, the win will be forgotten and the tournament is really all that matters. But still I think, if you have a winning position and you consider yourself a good player, then you should try to win it. If you're not ready to win a position like that, then why are you here?'

Well, maybe Magnus was not on your mind then, but last night when you were trying to get to sleep, was he on your mind?
'No, I didn't think about him at all (laughs). When I prepare for the match, obviously I will, but this has just finished. When I start preparing for the match very seriously, obviously he will be on my mind, but before that...'

You mean there were entirely different things on your mind last night....
'No, mainly I wanted to sleep. I was exhausted after yesterday.' ■

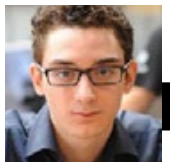
MARIA EMELIANOVA

Wolfgang Grenke applauds Magnus Carlsen's sporting gesture as the World Champion congratulates Fabiano Caruana on his win in this year's Grenke Classic.

Carlsen-Caruana in their own moves

Annotated games by Magnus Carlsen, Fabiano Caruana, Peter Heine Nielsen and Simen Agdestein

Ever since they played their first game in Wijk aan Zee in 2010, the duels between Magnus Carlsen and Fabiano Caruana have featured prominently in New In Chess. We take you on a fascinating voyage in time with a selection of nine of their games as they appeared on our pages.



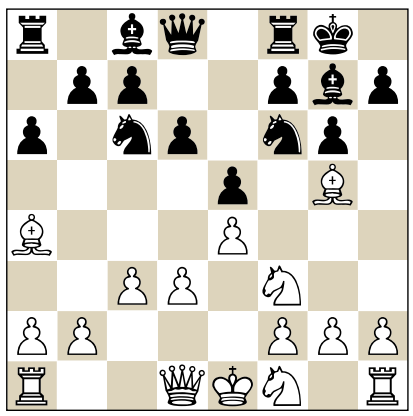
NOTES BY
Fabiano Caruana

Magnus Carlsen
Fabiano Caruana
Wijk aan Zee 2010 (13)
Ruy Lopez, Anderssen Variation

This was one of the critical games of the last round. Magnus Carlsen had 8 points from 12 games, half a point ahead of his nearest rivals Kramnik and Shirov. If he were to beat me, he would claim clear first place.

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.d3 d6 6.c3 g6 7.♘bd2 ♗g7 8.♘f1 0-0 9.♗g5

I knew very little about this variation, so it was at this point that I started thinking on my own.



9...d5!? An enterprising and risky move, which, however, has no clear refutation.

10.♕e2

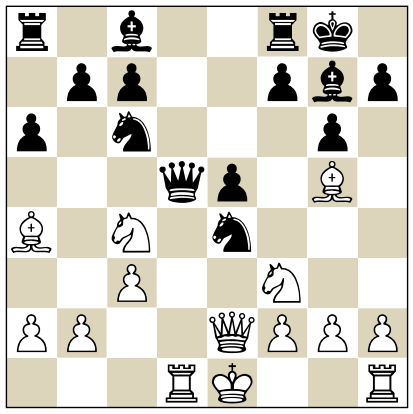
Other moves also lead to a roughly equal game: 10.exd5 ♕xd5 11.♘e3 ♕d6 (11...♕c5 12.0-0 ♗e6 13.♘d2!, and Black has problems coordinating) 12.0-0 (12.♘c4 ♕d5 13.♗xc6?! bxc6 is positionally dubious for White) 12...b5 13.♗b3 ♗e6, with an equal game.

10.♘e3 dxe4 11.♗xf6 ♕xf6 12.dxe4 ♘e7 is also fine for Black.

10...♕d6 11.♗xf6

This surprised me. I hadn't expected him to give up the bishop pair without a fight.

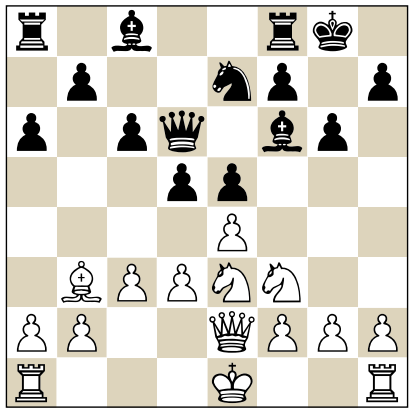
I had expected 11.♘e3!?, with the tactical point of 11...dxe4 (I was instead planning 11...b5) 12.dxe4 ♘xe4 13.♘c4 ♕d5 14.♖d1, but here I missed the spectacular blow



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

14...♘d4!! 15.cxd4 ♘xg5 16.♘xg5 ♕xg2, and Black wins!

11...♗xf6 12.♘e3 ♘e7 13.♗b3 c6



14.h4!?

A move which threw me off balance. I didn't realize he could play this way! Soon, I started to feel uncomfortable, because I couldn't see how to counter his attack.

14...♗e6 15.♘g5

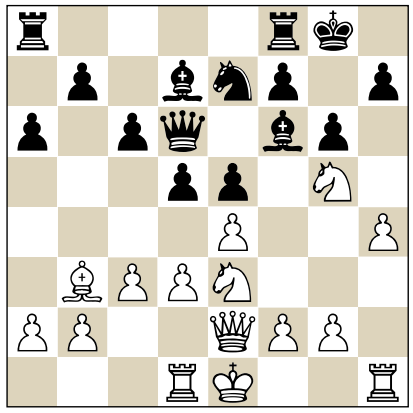
15.h5 a5 leads to good play for Black.

15...♗d7 16.♖d1

A useful move. In many lines White will have tactical opportunities because of the queen's vulnerability on d6.

Black has no problems at all after 16.exd5 cxd5 17.♕f3 (17.♘xd5? loses to 17...♗xg5) 17...♗c6.

'Soon, I started to feel uncomfortable, because I couldn't see how to counter his attack.'



16...♖ad8!!

This deep move was the most difficult one of the game. I hold up my shaky rear by tactical measures!

My first intention was 16...b5?, but then I noticed the refutation: 17.exd5 cxd5 18.♕f3 ♗c6 19.♘e4! dxe4 20.dxe4, with a very strong initiative for White.

Of course it was possible to play 16...h6, but then after 17.♘f3, the threat of h5 becomes more unpleasant, as the g6-pawn has been weakened.

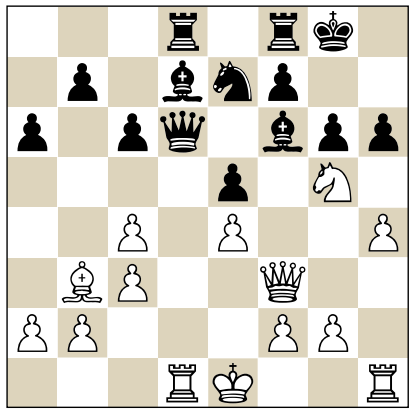
17.♕f3?

An error based on miscalculation. 17.exd5 cxd5 18.♕f3 ♗c8! was the main point of 16...♖ad8.

I suggest 17.♘f3!?, with h4-h5 to come, as White's best chance, although Black is obviously not worse.

17...h6 18.♘c4 dxc4 19.dxc4

Seemingly attractive, but...



19...♘d5!

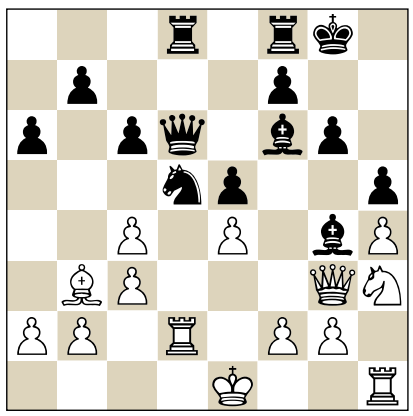
This interposition turns the tables!

20.♘h3

A sad move to have to make, but the alternatives would have lost: 20.exd5? hxg5 21.c5 e4, or 20.cxd5? hxg5

21.dxc6 ♕xc6. In both cases White has no compensation for the lost piece. 20.c5 ♕e7 21.exd5 cxd5 is also winning for Black.

20...h5 21.♕g3 ♗g4 22.♖d2



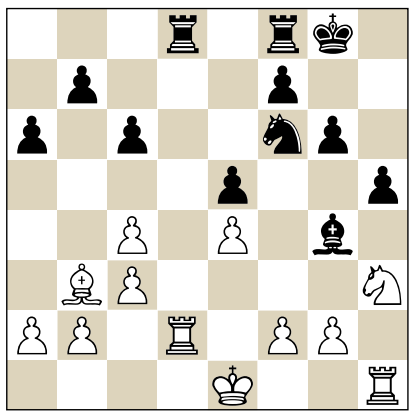
22...♗xh4

Also possible was 22...♕e7 23.cxd5 ♗xh4 24.♕d3 ♔g7, when Black plans ...f5. Due to White's offside knight Black has a serious advantage.

23.♕xh4 ♕f6

23...♘f4? is very nice, but fails to 24.♕xd8! ♕xd8 25.♖xd8 ♖xd8 26.♘xf4 exf4 27.f3 ♗e6 28.c5, with an equal endgame.

24.♕xf6 ♘xf6



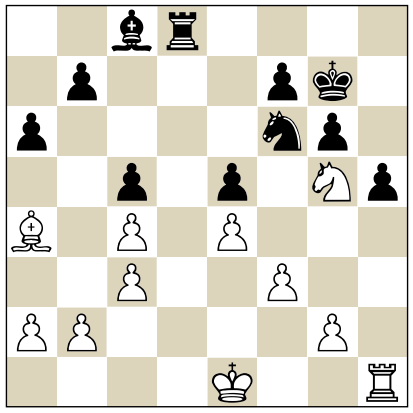
'A move few people would have the strength to make. Objectively it is a mistake, but it offers practical chances.'

This is a very unpleasant endgame for White.

25.♘g5 c5 26.f3 ♗c8 27.♗a4 ♔g7 28.♖xd8

I expected 28.g3 ♖xd2 29.♔xd2 ♔h6 30.f4, and here I had planned 30...♗e6!, when it is very awkward to defend the c4-pawn.

28...♖xd8



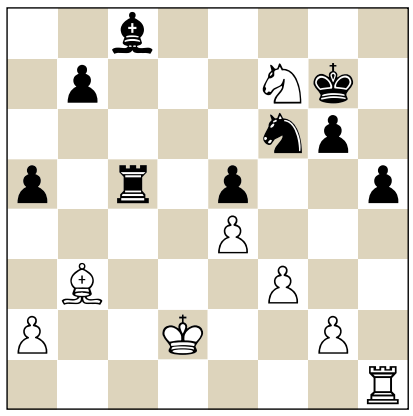
29.b4!?

A move few people would have the strength to make. Objectively it is a mistake, but it offers practical chances, as I was in time-trouble.

29...♖d3 30.bxc5 ♖xc3?!

Unnecessarily complicating matters. Correct was 30...♘d7! 31.c6 (31.♗xd7 ♗xd7 is hopeless for White) 31...♘c5 32.cxb7 ♗xb7, and White is being dominated.

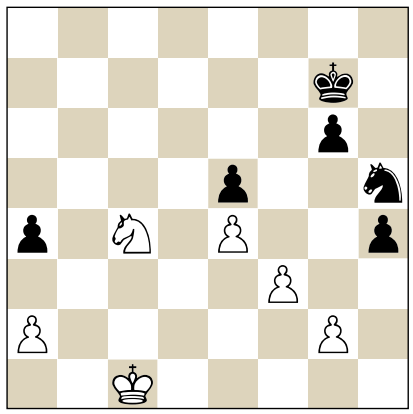
31.♔d2 ♖xc4 32.♗b3 ♖xc5 33.♘xf7 a5



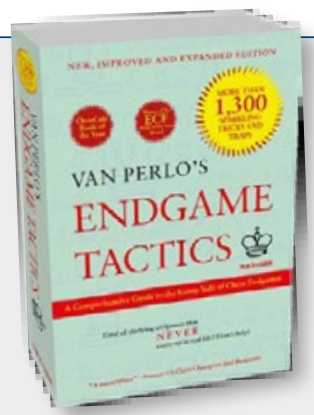
34.♖c1!

Although the ensuing knight endgame looks lost, this was still White's only chance to resist.

34...♖xc1 35.♔xc1 a4 36.♗c4 b5 37.♘d6 bxc4 38.♘xc8 h4 39.♘b6 ♘h5 40.♘xc4



40...♔f6?



Did you know that endgames are actually fun?

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Gerhard Josten, Rochade Europa

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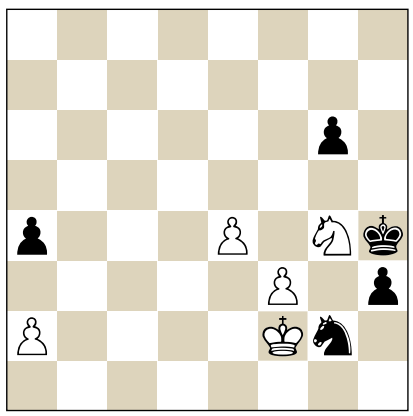
Bad luck! This only leads to a draw, whereas 40...♘f4 would win! But it's difficult to decide with only two minutes on your clock for the last move of the time-control.

So I should have played 40...♘f4!! 41.♘xe5 ♘xg2 (I don't see any way for Black to win after 41...♔f6 42.♘g4+ ♔g5 43.♘f2! ♘xg2 44.♘h3+ ♔h5 45.♔d2 g5 46.♔e2 g4 47.fxg4+ ♔xg4 48.♘f2+ ♔f4 49.♘d3+ ♔xe4 50.♘c5+, with a draw), and now:

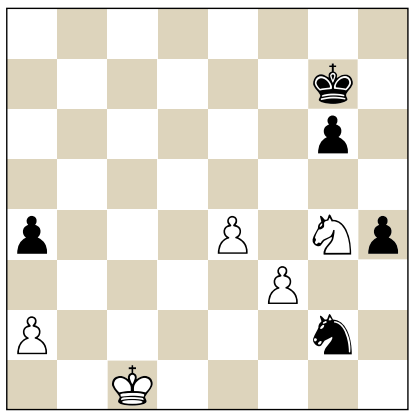
A) 42.♔d2 ♔f6 43.♘g4+ ♔g5 44.♔e2 h3 45.♔f2 ♔h4.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

This position is winning for Black. Due to zugzwang White will be forced to allow Black's king into g3: 46.e5 ♘f4 47.a3 g5 48.♔e3 ♔g3 49.♔e4 ♘e6 50.♘e3 ♘g7! – an impressive manoeuvre, preparing ...h2 – 51.♘g4 h2 52.♘xh2 ♔xh2 53.f4 g4 54.f5 g3 55.f6 g2 56.f7 ♘e6, and Black queens first;

B) 42.♘g4

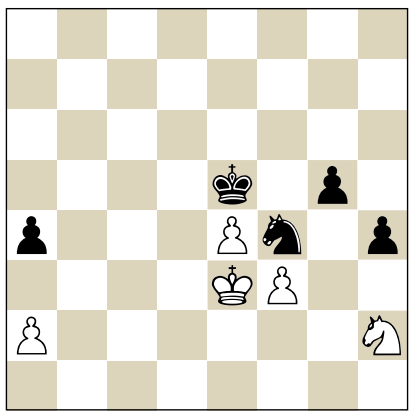


ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

42...♘e1! (an important move, allowing the king to advance to the centre) 43.♘h2 ♔f6 44.♔d2 ♘g2 45.♔e2 ♔e5 46.♔f2 ♘f4 47.♔e3 g5.

TORSTEN BEHL

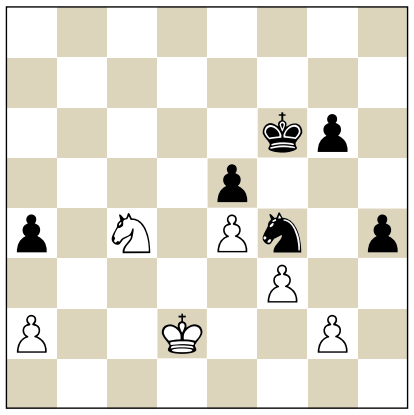
In their first game ever, in Wijk aan Zee in 2010, Fabiano Caruana came close to spoiling Magnus Carlsen's tournament. 'Bad luck! This move leads to a draw.'



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

This position is losing for White due to the weakness of White's a-pawn: 48.♘g4+ ♔d6 49.♔d4 ♘e2+ 50.♔e3 ♘c3 51.a3 ♘b1 52.f4 gxf4+ 53.♔xf4 ♘xa3 54.♘e3 h3 55.♔g3 ♔e5 56.♔xh3 ♔xe4 57.♘d1 ♘b1, and the a-pawn is unstoppable.

41.♔d2 ♘f4

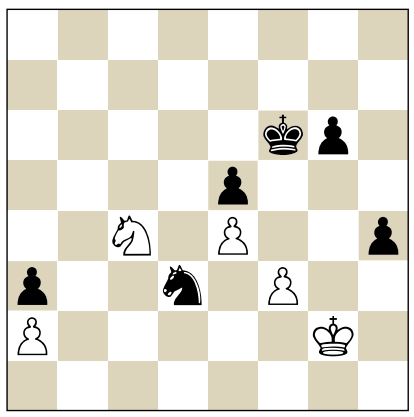


42.♔e3 Obviously not 42.♘e3? ♔g5 43.♔e1 ♘xg2+ 44.♘xg2 h3 45.♔f2 h2, and the black pawn queens.

42...♘xg2+ 43.♔f2 ♘f4 44.♘b2 a3

44...♔g5 45.a3! is also drawn: 45...♔h5 (or 45...h3 46.♔g3 with a draw) 46.♘xa4 ♘d3+ 47.♔g2 ♘e1+ 48.♔f2 ♘c2 49.♘c5 ♘xa3 50.♘d3 ♘c4 51.♔g2 g5 52.♔h3 ♔g6 53.♔g4 ♘e3+ 54.♔h3 ♔f6 55.♘c5 ♔e7 56.♘d3 ♔d6 57.♔h2, and Black cannot make any progress: 57...♘c2 58.♔h3 ♘d4 59.♔g4 ♘e6 60.♘f2 ♔c5 61.♔f5, with a draw.

45.♘c4 ♘d3+ 46.♔g2

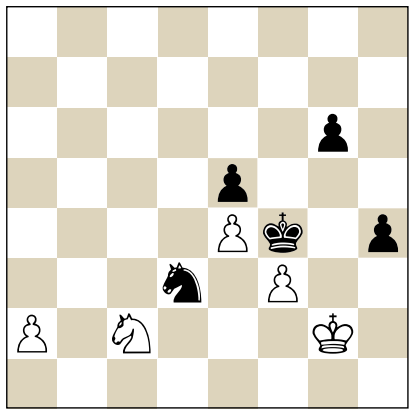


46...♔g5

46...♘b4 47.♘xa3 ♘xa2 48.♘c4 is similar to 44...♔g5. This 3 vs 2 pawns endgame is always drawn.

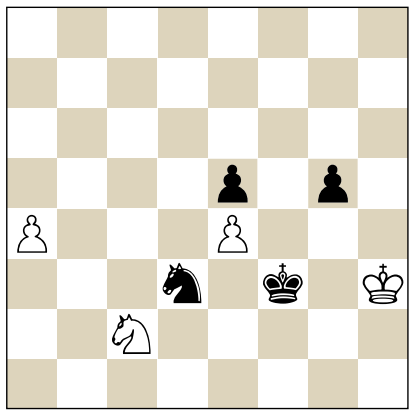
46...♘e1+ 47.♔f2 ♘c2 48.♔g2 g5 49.♔h3 ♘e1 50.♔g4 ♘d3 51.♔h3. Again, Black will have to trade the a-pawns, with a draw.

47.♘xa3 ♔f4 48.♘c2



At this point I realized how White would draw after 48...g5.

48...♘b2 If 48...g5 then 49.a4 h3+ 50.♔xh3 ♔xf3.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

51.♔h2! (this is the move I had overlooked in my previous analysis. When White's king reaches g1, it will be impossible to create threats with the g-pawn) 51...g4 (51...♔f2 52.♔h3 is a repetition; 51...♘f4 52.♔g1 ♘e2+ 53.♔f1 ♘g3+ 54.♔g1 ♘xe4 55.a5, with a draw) 52.♔g1 ♔xe4 53.a5, and, as usual, White's a-pawn is too far advanced for Black to have any winning chances.

49.♘b4 h3+ 50.♔xh3 ♔xf3 51.♔h4 ♔f4 52.♘d5+ ♔xe4 53.♘e7

Eliminating the g-pawn. The draw becomes obvious.

53...♔f3 54.♘xg6 e4 55.♘e5+ ♔f4 56.♘g4 ♘a4

Draw.

NOTES BY

Magnus Carlsen

Magnus Carlsen
Fabiano Caruana
Sao Paulo/Bilbao 2012 (6)
French Defence

1.e4 e6 2.d3

The French Defence was a huge surprise to me, so I decided to apply the same strategy that had brought me my only victory so far in the tournament, namely push the d-pawn one square forward as early as possible.

2...d5 3.♘d2 ♘f6 4.♘gf3 ♘c6

A perfectly reasonable way of avoiding the 'fearsome' King's Indian Attack, which starts with 4...c5 5.g3 and so on.

5.c3 ♗d6

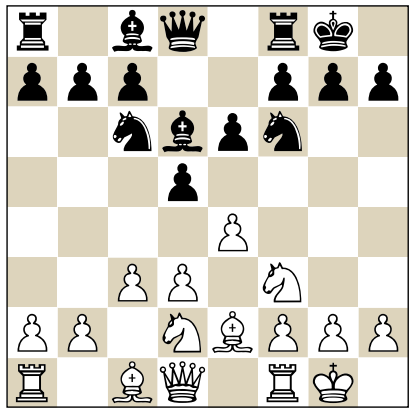
This looks a little weird, but is actually quite logical. After the immediate 5...e5, or 5...dxe4 6.dxe4 e5, Black would have to reckon with the b4-push.

6.♗e2 It seemed to me that the bishop would have more work here than on g2 after a subsequent 6...dxe4 7.dxe4 e5, and besides, this move seemed to fit better with ideas of pushing b4.

6...0-0 7.0-0

7.b4, here or on the previous move, could have been met effectively by 7...dxe4 8.dxe4 a5 9.b5 ♘e5, and White has gained some space but also weakened some squares, so Black should be doing fine.

'I decided to apply the same strategy that had brought me my only victory, namely push the d-pawn one square forward as early as possible.'



7...a5

Black had several choices here.

– 7...e5 would be met by 8.b4, and White has a clearly excellent version of the Philidor. Whether that would be sufficient for an advantage, though, is quite unclear.

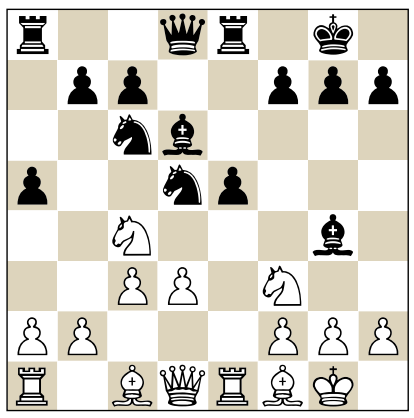
– 7...b6 8.♖e1 ♗b7 9.♗f1 seems a little artificial for Black.

– 7...♖e8 8.♖e1 a5 9.♗f1 e5 10.exd5 ♘xd5 11.♘c4 would transpose to the game.

8.♖e1 e5 9.exd5

Other Philidor-style moves like 9.♗f1 or 9.b3 were certainly possible, but I felt like forcing things a bit.

9...♘xd5 10.♘c4 ♖e8 11.♗f1 ♗g4



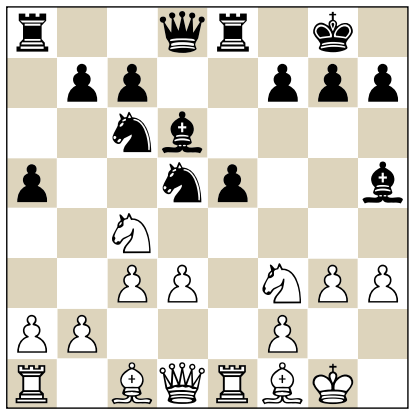
12.h3

12.g3 is not as accurate, as Black can play 12...♕d7, when the annoying bishop cannot be kicked with h3. I actually tried that in a similar position against Ponomariov in a blitz game once, who with a puzzled look on his face simply captured the pawn.

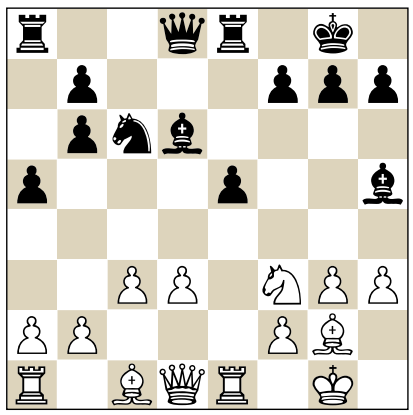
12...♗h5 13.g3

Once the e4-pawn is not there to

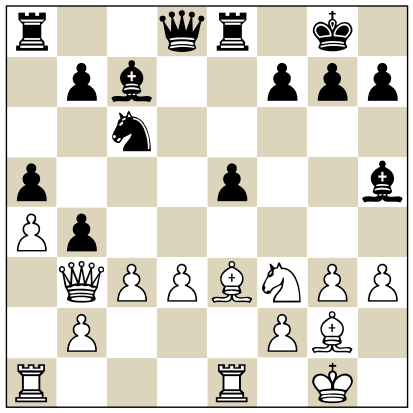
obstruct it, the bishop is re-deployed to the long diagonal.
Going on a fishing expedition with 13.g4 ♗g6 14.♕b3, as the comp seems to recommend, would probably have appealed to me on the next day against Paco, when I was in more of a coffee-house mood.



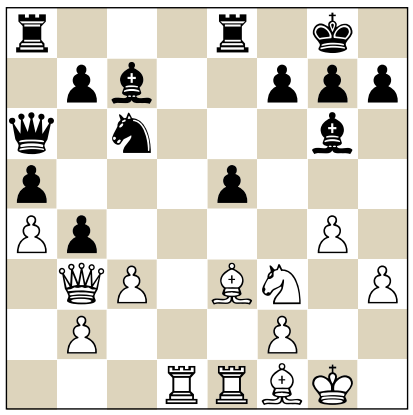
13...♘b6 A decent move, made after a long think. As you might have guessed, by this point we were both way 'out of book'.
14.♘xb6 cxb6 15.♗g2



15...b5? This one, however, is rather questionable, as will become apparent after a few more moves.
15...a4 would have retained equal chances.
16.a4!
Favourably fixing the black queenside pawns on dark squares.
16...b4
16...bxa4 17.♕xa4 also gives Black plenty to worry about.
17.♗e3 ♗c7 18.♕b3
Now the queen is active, and soon the knight will be taken to d2 and e4, when all the white minor pieces will be much more active than their black counterparts.

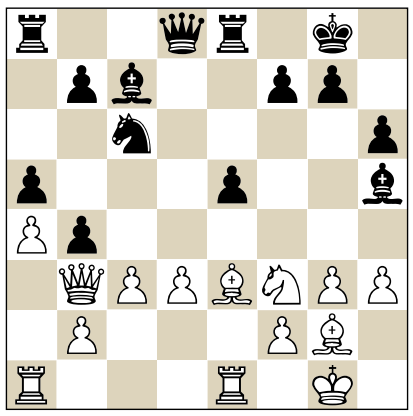


18...h6 It's not so easy to find a more useful move for Black here.
– 18...♕xd3? loses immediately: 19.♖ad1 ♕a6 (19...♕e4 20.♘h4 ♗xd1 21.♖xd1) 20.g4 ♗g6 21.♗f1,

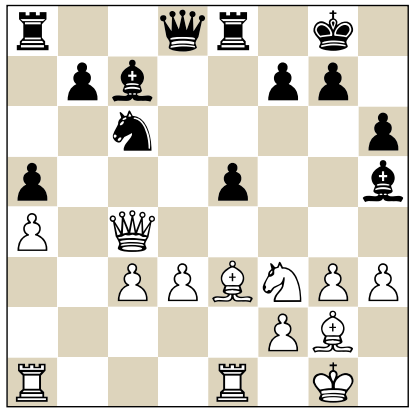


ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

and the queen is trapped.
– 18...♗xf3 19.♗xf3 ♕xd3 is possible, but even here Black has a very unpleasant position after 20.♖ad1 ♕f5 21.♗g4 ♕g6 22.♖d7 ♖ac8 23.♗e2!, with the threat of ♖xf7.



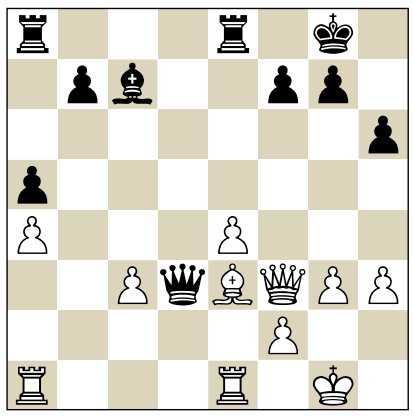
19.♕c4 According to a Russian GM, this was the move of a second-category (1600) player. He instead recommended 19.♘h4, which looks very attractive, as after 19...♕xd3 20.♖ad1 ♗xd1 21.♖xd1 ♕h7 22.♖d7 ♖e7 23.♗xc6 White wins. 19...♕c8, however, bothered me a little, as after 20.g4 ♕d8! 21.♘f5 ♗g6 it is not entirely clear what White has achieved.
19...bxc3 20.bxc3



20...e4 Otherwise, the pressure on the queenside would quickly have become unbearable.
21.dxe4 I played this and the next few moves quickly, as I couldn't wait to get to torture him in the endgame.
21.♘d4 would have been even stronger. I would probably have considered it, had I noticed that after 21...♘e5

'I played this and the next few moves quickly, as I couldn't wait to get to torture him in the endgame.'

22.♕b5 ♘xd3 the bishop is actually hanging: 23.♕xh5.
21...♗xf3 22.♗xf3 ♘e5 23.♕e2 ♘xf3+ 24.♕xf3 ♕d3

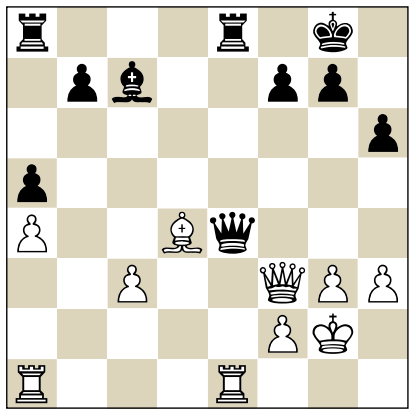


The position has been simplified quite a bit, but I had seen many moves ago

that even in the endgame Black is far away from a draw.

25.♔g2! This is much stronger than 25.♖ab1 ♕xe4 26.♕xe4 ♖xe4 27.♖xb7 ♗e5, when Black is pretty close to a draw, e.g. 28.♗d2 ♖xe1+ 29.♗xe1 ♖c8 30.♖b5 ♗xc3 31.♗xc3 ♖xc3.

25...♕xe4 26.♗d4

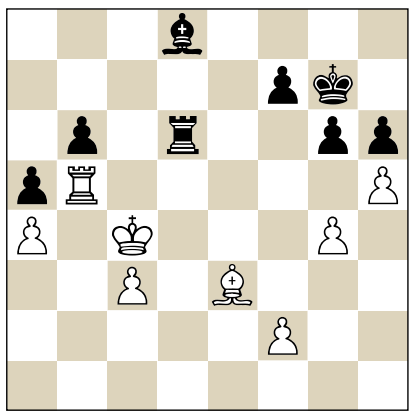


26...♕xf3+ 26...♕c6 27.♕xc6 bxc6 28.♖xe8+ ♖xe8 29.♖b1 also gives Black a very difficult defence. **27.♔xf3 b6 28.♖ab1 ♖ac8 29.♖e4 g6** 29...h5 seems logical, in order not to be stuck with a weak pawn on a dark square, but then after 30.♖b5 g6 31.g4 hxg4+ 32.hxg4 he might have to deal with a rook penetrating via the h-file at some point.

29...f6 might be the best way to arrange the pawns, but even here, after an eventual g4/h5, Black will have problems on both flanks.

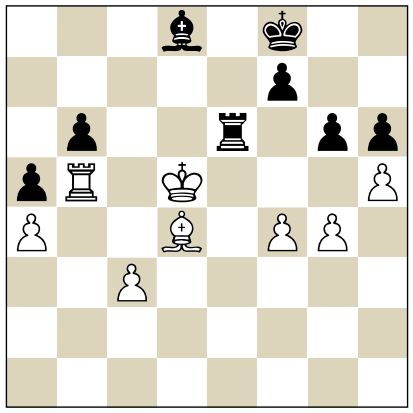
30.g4! Fixing the pawn on h6.

30...♔f8 31.h4 ♖xe4 32.♔xe4 ♖e8+ 33.♔d3 ♖e6 34.♗e3 ♔g7 35.♖b5 ♗d8 36.h5 ♖d6+ 37.♔c4



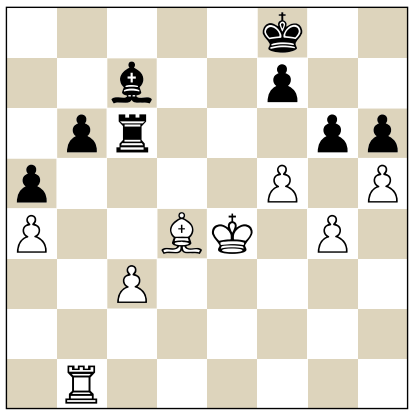
37...♖c6+ Caruana suggested 37...f5 as a possible improvement. I intended to keep the pressure with 38.f3, when Black can exchange a couple of pawns, but is still a long way from a draw after 38...fxg4 39.fxg4 gxh5 40.gxh5.

38.♔d5 ♖e6 39.♗d4+ ♔f8 40.f4



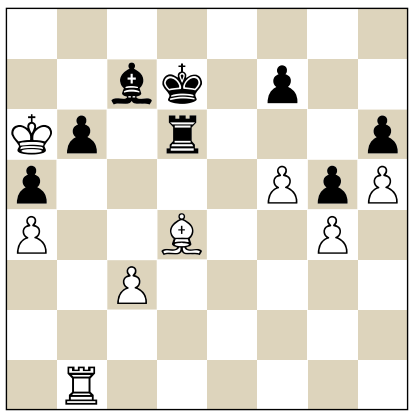
With the pawn coming to f5, I felt pretty sure that I was winning. White just gains more and more ground, and eventually Black cannot hold on to everything.

40...♗c7 41.f5 ♖d6+ 42.♔e4 ♖c6 43.♖b1



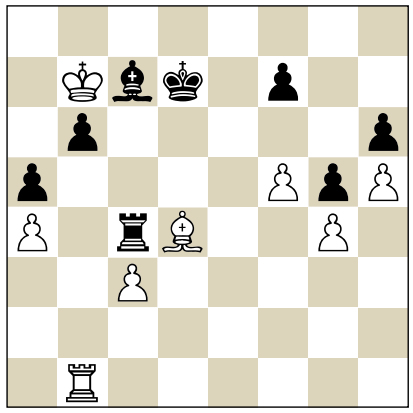
43...♔e8 Allowing a more or less forced win, but the position was lost in any case.

– 43...g5 closes the kingside, but now the king creates havoc on the queenside, while ♗g7 is always an issue: 44.♔d5 ♖d6+ 45.♔c4 ♔e7 46.♔b5 ♔d7 47.♔a6



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

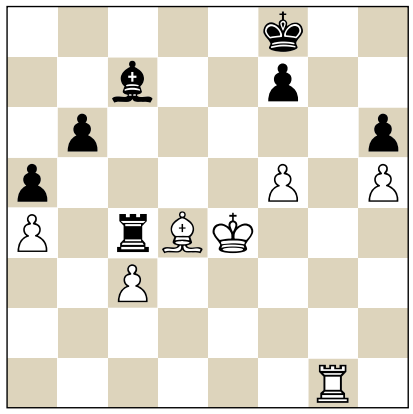
47...♖c6 (or 47...♔c6 48.♗xb6 ♖d8 49.♖b5 ♖a8+ 50.♗a7, and White wins) 48.♔b7 ♖c4



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

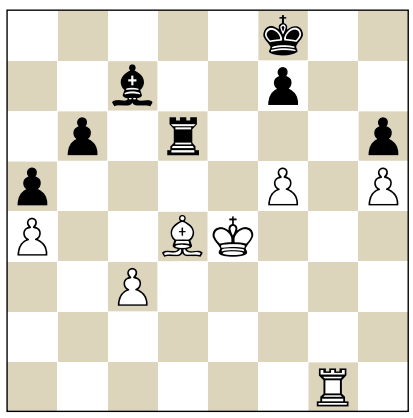
49.♗g7! ♗d6 (49...♖xg4 50.♖d1+ ♗d6 51.♗e5) 50.♗xh6 ♖xg4 51.♗g7 ♖h4 52.♖d1 ♔e7 53.♔c6! ♖c4+ 54.♔xb6 ♖xa4 55.♖h1, and the h-pawn will cost Black a rook.

– 43...gxh5 44.gxh5 ♖c4 45.♖a1 ♖c6 46.♖g1 ♖d6 (46...♖c4 allows White to finish in style:



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

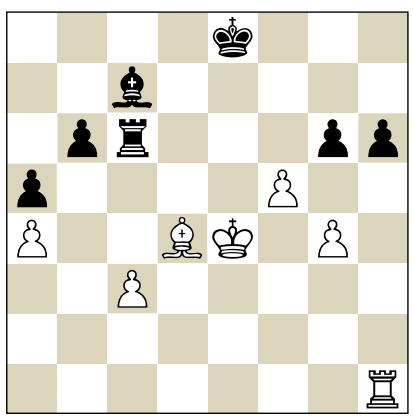
47.♔d5 ♖xa4 48.♖g4! ♖a1 49.♔c6 ♗h2 50.♗g7+ ♔e8 51.♖e4+ ♔d8 52.♗f6+, and mate next)



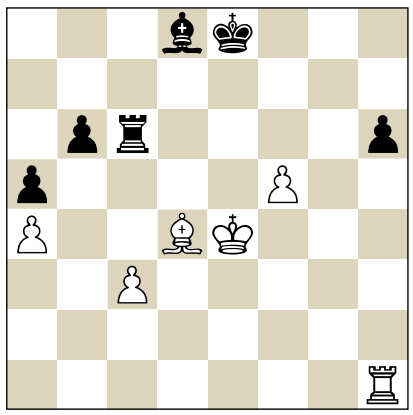
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

47.♗e5! (47.♖g7?? ♖xd4+) 47...♖c6

48.♗g7+ ♔e7 49.♗d4 ♔f8 50.♖g7, and the rook penetrates with decisive effect.
44.hxg6! Reducing the number of pawns, but I had seen a more or less forced win. **44...fxg6 45.♖h1**

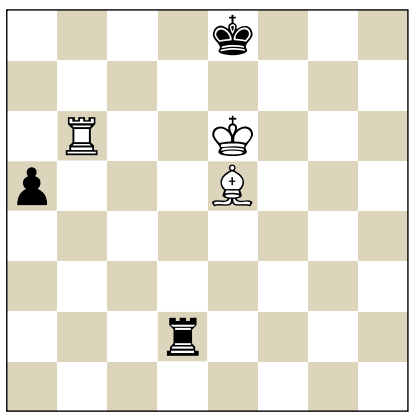


45...♔f7?! 45...gxf5+ 46.gxf5 ♗d8 (46...♖c4 47.♔d5 ♖xa4 48.♖xh6 wins easily, despite the limited material) was certainly the most tenacious defence, and the line I had spent the most time calculating:



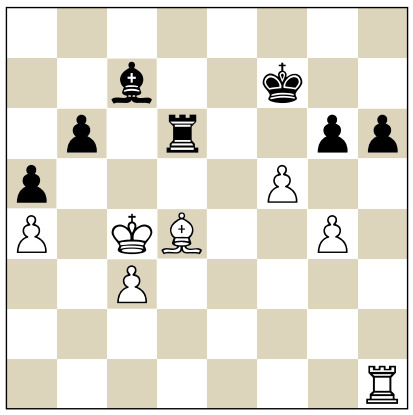
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

47.f6! ♗xf6 48.♖xh6 ♖xc3! (other moves lose rather trivially) 49.♗xf6 (49.♗xc3?? ♗xc3 50.♖xb6 is a tablebase draw!) 49...♖a3 50.♖h7! ♖xa4+ 51.♔d5 ♖a2 52.♔e6 ♖e2+ 53.♗e5 ♖f2 54.♖b7 ♖d2 55.♖xb6



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

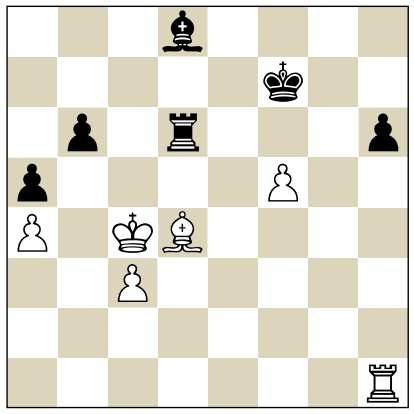
and the tablebase shows a win in 23 moves. In fact, the win is quite simple as soon as White captures the pawn, as has been shown many times, for instance in the recent game Grischuk-Kamsky from the Olympiad (see New In Chess 2012/7, p.15 – ed.).
46.♔d5 ♖d6+ 47.♔c4
Caruana spent a lot of time on this move and the next, but in vain.



47...gxf5 47...g5 48.♔b5 holds out longer, but the winning plan is quite clear even here: 48...♗d8 49.♔a6 ♖c6 50.♖h3! (50.♔b7 ♖c7+ is less accurate) 50...♖d6 (50...♔g8 51.f6!) 51.♔b7 ♔e8 52.♖h1 ♔f7 53.♔c8, with total zugzwang. Check for yourselves!
48.gxf5 ♗d8

NEW IN CHESS

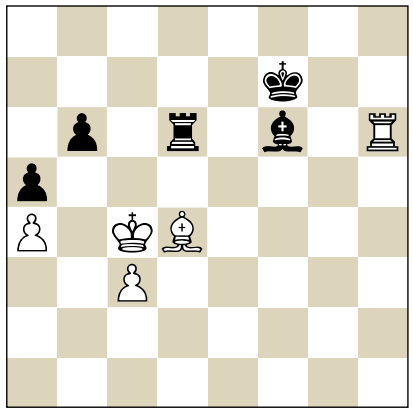
Bilbao Chess Masters Final 2012. Going by their body language both Magnus Carlsen and Fabiano Caruana seem to know what the blitz playoff has in store for them.



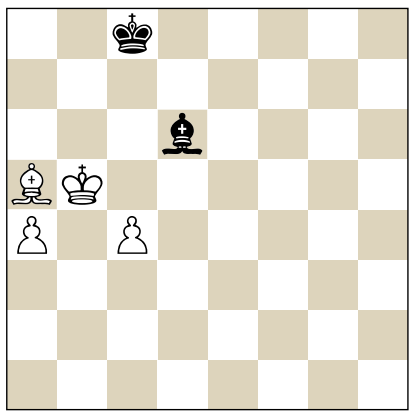
49.f6 I played this immediately, as I had double- and triple-checked the lines so many times already while he was thinking.

‘The tablebase shows a win in 23 moves. In fact, the win is quite simple.’

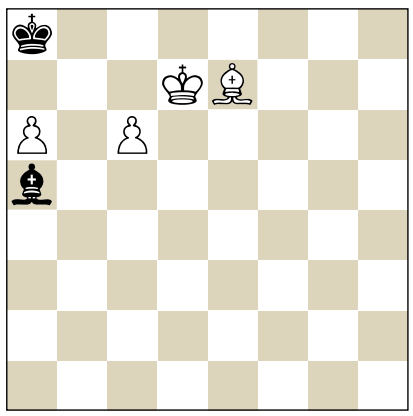
49...♗xf6 49...♔g6 50.♖g1+ ♔f7 51.♖g7+ ♔e8 52.♖g6 ♔f7 53.♖xh6, and there is nothing Black can do.
50.♖xh6



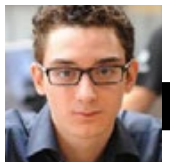
50...♗e7 Or 50...♔e7 51.♗xf6+ ♖xf6 52.♖xf6 ♔xf6 53.♔b5, and wins.
51.♖xd6 ♗xd6 52.♔b5 ♔e6 53.♗xb6 ♔d7 54.c4 ♔c8 55.♗xa5



It only remains for White not to let Black sac the bishop for the c-pawn. I (and I suspect quite a lot of other people) knew the winning method from the famous game Fischer-Keres, Zurich 1959.
55...♔b7 56.♗b4 ♗f4 57.c5 ♔a7 58.c6 ♔b8 59.a5 ♔a7 60.a6 ♔a8 61.♗c5 ♗b8 62.♔c4 ♗c7 63.♔d5 ♗d8 64.♔e6 ♗c7 65.♔d7 ♗a5 66.♗e7



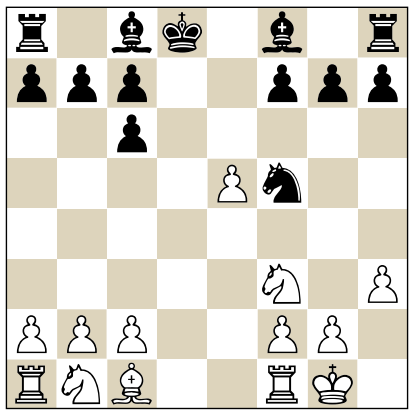
And at this point Black resigned, as 67.♗d8, followed by 68.c7, is coming up.



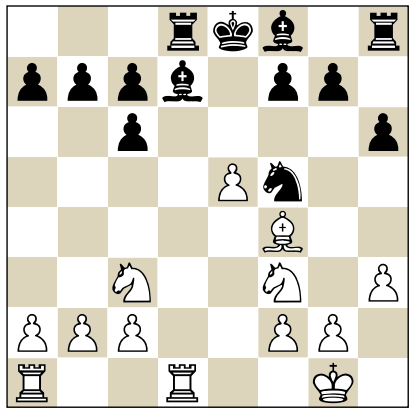
NOTES BY
Fabiano Caruana

Fabiano Caruana
Magnus Carlsen
Shamkir 2014 (4)
Ruy Lopez, Berlin Defence

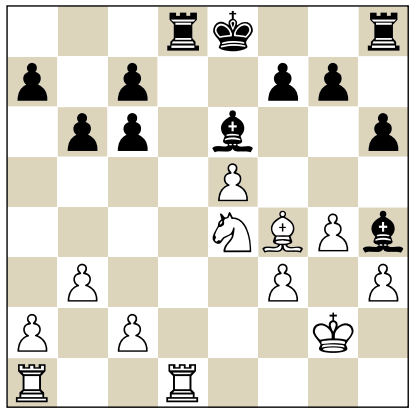
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 ♘f6 4.0-0 ♘xe4 5.d4 ♘d6 6.♗xc6 dxc6 7.dxe5 ♘f5 8.♕xd8+ ♔xd8 9.h3



9...h6
In the World Championship match against Anand in Chennai, Magnus played 9...♗d7. Perhaps he feared preparation and was hoping to surprise me, but he made an unfortunate choice, going for a line I knew well, as I had faced it last year against Ruslan Ponomariov.
The fourth match game in Chennai saw 9...♗d7 10.♖d1 ♗e7 11.♘c3 (it's interesting that exactly one day before the Anand-Carlsen game, Grischuk played the same variation against me during the European Team Championship. I played 11.g4 and the game was eventually drawn) 11...♔c8 12.♗g5 h6 13.♗xe7 ♘xe7 14.♖d2 c5 15.♖ad1 ♗e6 16.♘e1 ♘g6 17.♘d3 b6 18.♘e2, and now Magnus grabbed a pawn with 18...♗xa2!, held onto it and nearly won the game. (New In Chess 2013/8 pp. 19-24 – ed.)
10.♖d1+
Now Black's king is forced to e8, which generally speaking is an awkward square.
10...♔e8 11.♘c3 ♗d7 12.♗f4 ♖d8



13.♘e4
This is the new move. In the aforementioned game against Ponomariov, I played 13.e6 and didn't pose serious problems to my opponent: 13.e6 ♗xe6 14.♗xc7 ♖xd1+ 15.♖xd1 ♗e7 16.g4 ♘h4 17.♘d4 ♗d7 18.♖e1 ♔f8 19.♗g3 g5 20.♗xh4 gxh4 21.♘e4 ♔g7, although perhaps if I had played more accurately here I could have counted on a miniscule advantage.
13...♗e7
I was happy to see this move. After the trade of knights White's position is very comfortable.
13...c5!? seems like the most critical move. I was planning 14.e6 ♗xe6 15.♗xc7 ♖c8 16.♗h2, with a small advantage, but Black should be able to defend with accuracy.
14.g4 ♘h4 15.♘xh4 ♗xh4 16.♔g2 ♗e6 17.f3 b6 18.b3



18...c5?!
A strategic mistake. After the game Magnus said he wanted to use the d4-square, but underestimated the importance of the d5-square.
I was expecting 18...♖d7 19.c4 ♔d8. If Black is given time to play ...♔c8 and ...♖d8 he will have a fine position. White has to act fast: 20.♗g3 ♗e7 21.f4

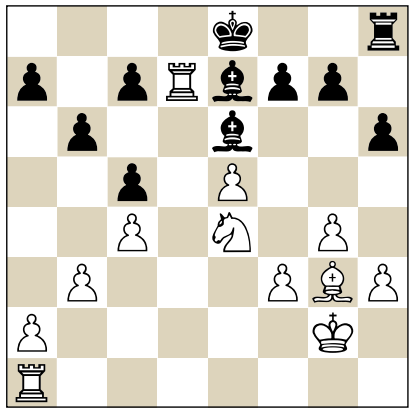
g6 22.♖f1!, and the threat of f5 is very unpleasant.

19.c4 Perhaps 19.♗g3 ♗e7 20.c4 was more accurate.

19...♖d7

19...♖d4 20.♗e3 ♖xd1 21.♖xd1 doesn't solve Black's problems.

20.♗g3 ♗e7 21.♖xd7



21...♗xd7

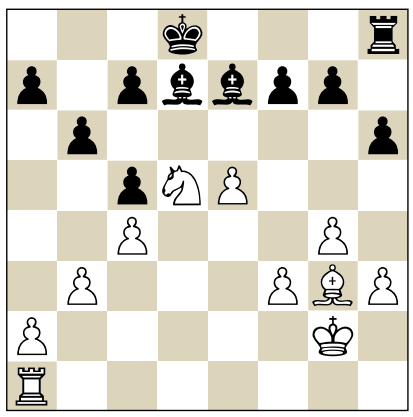
Understandably, Magnus wanted his bishop out of the way of f4-f5.

However, 21...♔xd7 was a stronger alternative: 22.f4 g6 23.♖f1 ♔c8 24.f5 gxf5 25.gxf5 ♗d7 and it isn't easy to prove a clear advantage for White.

22.♘c3 ♔d8?!

It made sense to set up a passive but solid defensive formation: 22...♗d8 23.♘d5 ♗c8, and just sit and wait, unpleasant though it may be.

23.♘d5



NEW IN CHESS

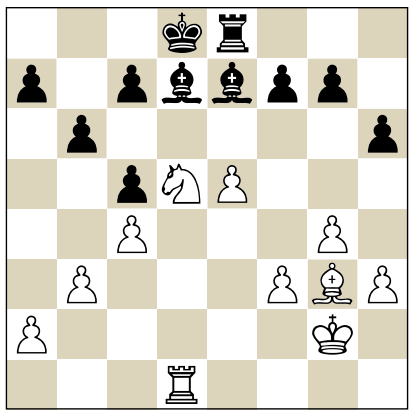
Shamkir 2014. Fully concentrated and very determined, Fabiano Caruana showed once again that he not only wants to challenge Magnus Carlsen, but is also capable of beating the world's number one.

23...♖e8

Magnus played this and the next move surprisingly quickly. He was probably already disgusted with his position.

After 23...c6, White should simplify into an opposite-coloured bishop ending: 24.♘xe7 ♔xe7 25.f4, with good winning chances.

24.♖d1



24...♔c8??

Just losing a pawn for nothing. It's hard to say what Magnus overlooked.

24...c6 25.♘xe7 (25.♘c7 ♖g8 26.e6 fxe6 27.♘xe6+ ♔c8) 25...♖xe7 26.♗h4 g5 27.♗g3 is awful for Black, but there was already no choice.

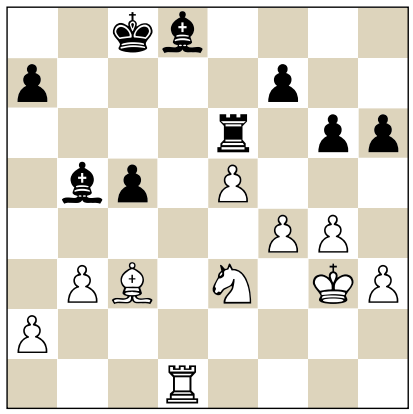
25.♘xc7 ♖d8 26.♘d5

Besides being up a pawn, White also has a commanding position.

26...♖e8 27.♗e1 ♗d8 28.♗c3 g6 29.♔g3

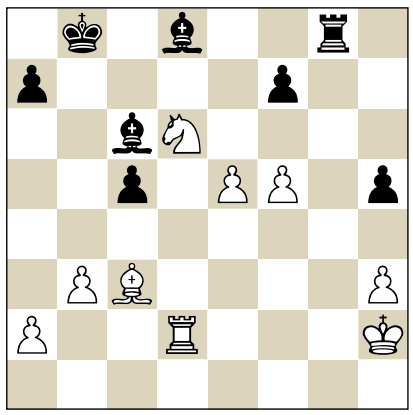
Now I would prefer 29.a4!, snuffing out any hopes of counterplay.

29...b5 30.cxb5 ♗xb5 31.♘e3 ♖e6 32.f4



32...♖a6 Black is trying to create counterplay any way he can, but White

is too solid. **33.♖d2 h5 34.gxh5 gxh5 35.♘f5 ♖g6+ 36.♔h2 ♗c6 37.♘d6+ ♔b8 38.f5 ♖g8**

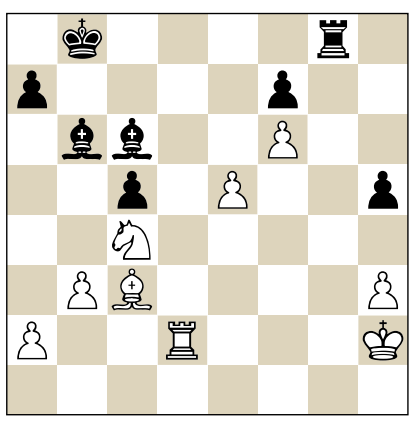


39.f6! An important move, blocking the bishop's access to h4

39...♗b6 40.♘c4?

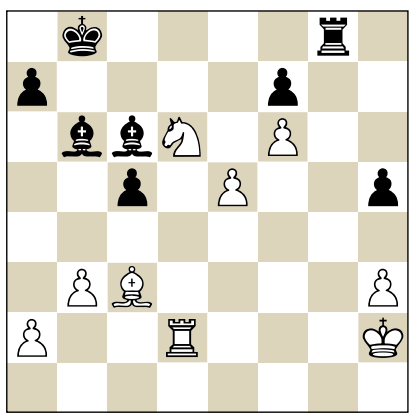
With two minutes on my clock for the last move, I got spooked by Black's counterplay with ...c4 and committed a serious inaccuracy.

40.♘xf7! c4 41.h4! is the game.



40...♖e8? Giving me a second chance! I calculated a bit and decided to take the pawn. 40...♗c7 41.♗a5 is probably winning for White, but he could have put up serious resistance.

41.♘d6 ♖g8

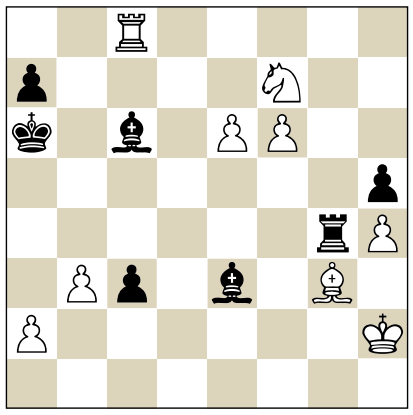


42.♘xf7! A pawn is a pawn, after all.

42...c4 43.h4 ♖g4 44.e6

This is what I hadn't seen before the time control. The bishop will protect everything from e5.

44...♗e3 45.♗e5+ ♔a8 46.♖d8+ ♔b7 47.♗g3 c3 48.♖b8+ ♔a6 49.♖c8



49...♗d5 I spent some time figuring out what happens after 49...♖c4 50.bxc4 c2 51.♖xc6+ ♔a5 52.♗c7+ ♔a4 53.♖a6+ ♔b4 54.♗d6+ ♔c3 55.♗a3. Good calculation, but unfortunately I missed a mate in two with 52.♗e1!.

50.♖xc3 ♗d4 51.♖d3 ♖e4 52.♖d2 ♖xe6 53.♘g5 Black resigned.

NOTES BY

Peter Heine Nielsen

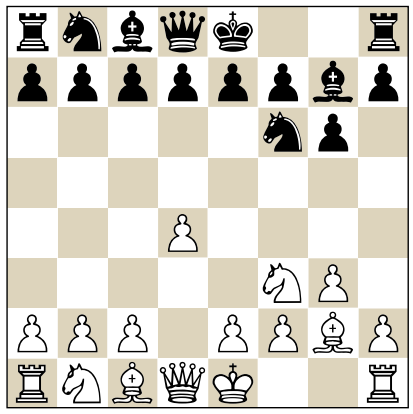
Magnus Carlsen
Fabiano Caruana
Shamkir 2014 (10)
Queen's Pawn Game

After two unexpected losses in Rounds 4 and 5, Magnus recovered nicely with two wins after the free day in Rounds 6 and 7. But then he slowed down with a couple of draws, while Caruana continued at full speed with two wins. At the start of the final round, Caruana had caught up with Magnus, turning their game into a clear final. Although Caruana had won their first encounter, the tie-break favoured Magnus, as the number of wins would decide in case of a tie for first. Even so, both players were eager to fight and try for unshared first, as well as ending the tournament on a high note.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 g6 3.g3!?

While predicting that Caruana would go for the Grünfeld was easy, guessing how Magnus would respond to it, was quite another matter.

3...♗g7 4.♗g2



4...c5

Caruana also played an early ...c5 against Nakamura in Wijk aan Zee this year. It is a very common and popular system, which is also played a lot by Radjabov. However, Magnus, unlike for instance Nakamura, has not yet played c4 here, and that gives him an extra option.

4...0-0 5.0-0 c5 might have been the right move order for Black, as after 6.c3 cxd4 7.cxd4 d5 Black gets a well-known position from the ...c6-d5 lines, but with White having castled, which makes a difference, as ♘e5 or ♘c3 would have been relevant white options otherwise. However, 6.dxc5!? would be an interesting try, as it's not that clear how Black will get the pawn back.

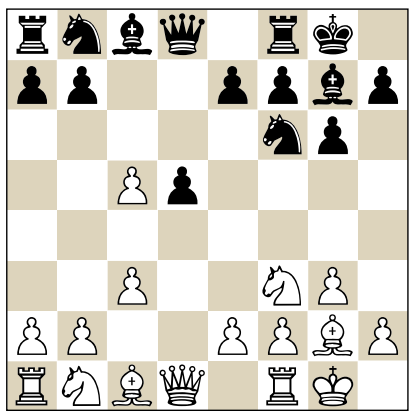
5.c3!?

A very unambitious-looking move, but with quite some sting. Obvious is 5...cxd4 6.cxd4 d5, with a well-known position from the ...c6-d5 line. White has lost some options, for instance the ♕a4 line with which Magnus scored a nice win against Gelfand earlier this year in Zurich. It could also be argued that if Caruana had wanted to play the ...c6-d5 system, well then he would just have played it! A fitting move

would have been 5...♕c7, as played by Gashimov himself. And if Caruana had known this, he would quite likely have done so, but the time used by both players around here indicated that they were already out of their opening preparation after 5 c3!?.

5...d5 6.dxc5! The only way to challenge Caruana's move.

6...0-0 7.0-0

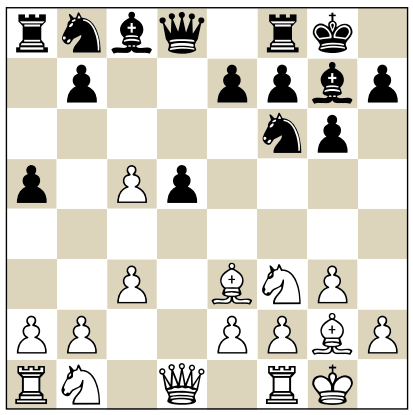


7...a5!?

The modern treatment, but actually most of the tests of this set-up have been with reversed colours, leaving the gambiting player a tempo down.

Twenty years ago, in the Candidates' match between Romanishin and Anand, the Ukrainian allowed Vishy to play ...b5 and keep his pawn. In fact, he did it so successfully that the line evaporated from practice for quite a while. But recently, by playing a4, and thus stopping ...b5, White has been reasonably successful, and Caruana quite boldly tries out the concept, even with a tempo less.

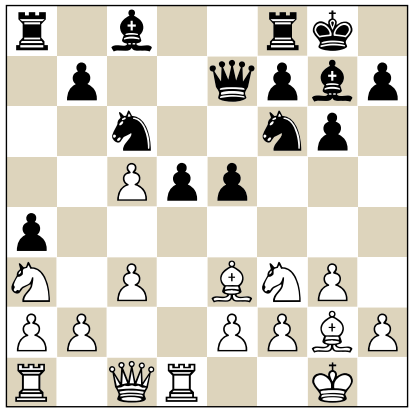
8.♗e3 An ambitious move, aiming to keep the extra pawn. 8.c4!? also has its points, as White wants ♘c3 or cxd5 next, and if 8...dxc4 9.♘e5 after a later ♘xc4 the b6-square becomes inviting due to the weakening ...a5.



8...♘c6

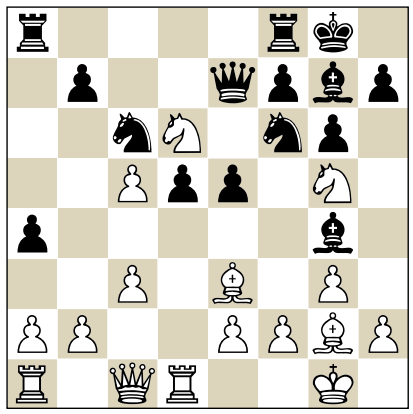
8...♘g4 was an attempt to dislodge the bishop from e3, in order later to try and win back the c-pawn: 9.♗d4 e5 10.h3 exd4 11.hxg4 dxc3 12.♘xc3 ♗xg4, and now, after White takes on d5 (either way), he will be a pawn up, but Black will have the typical Grünfeld compensation. Most likely, Magnus would have chosen the double-edged 9.♕d2!?, with a very interesting position, playable for both sides.

9.♘a3 a4 10.♕c1 e5 11.♖d1 ♕e7



One has to admire Caruana's courage. Playing Black against the world's number one he has sacrificed a pawn and is still playing it calmly and positionally! Whether White is better or whether Black has sufficient practical compensation, is very much a matter of belief and apparently not a huge concern for either player, as true to their style they are both just trying to put as much pressure on their opponent as possible.

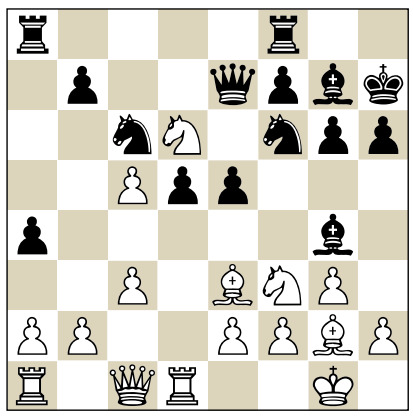
12.♘b5 ♗e6 13.♘g5 ♗g4 14.♘d6



14...h6!

14...♗xe2? 15.♖xd5! was Magnus's point. Taking the exchange with 15...♘xd5 16.♗xd5 ♘d8 (else f7 drops) and now, for example, 17.♕c2 ♗g4 18.♕e4 leads to a dominating and probably winning position for White. But of course Caruana is not tempted by material gains, but continues to play in gambit style, keeping his strong centre intact.

15.♘f3 ♔h7



16.h3?!

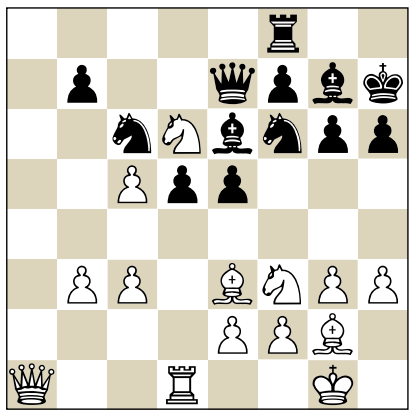
In this tournament, Carlsen occasionally suffered from moderate time-pressure, so maybe in this decisive game he wanted to keep things under control. But while the move was executed quickly, it also weakens his kingside structure unnecessarily. The immediate 16.b4!? would have been better, and despite the fact that Black certainly has decent compensation, it seems to me that White's position is more promising.

'One has to admire Caruana's courage. Playing Black against the world's number one he has sacrificed a pawn and is still playing it calmly and positionally!'

NEW IN CHESS

Is it winning? Sarkhan Gashimov and the Carlsen team (Björn Gunnar Nesse, Peter Heine Nielsen and father Henrik) follow the last moves of Carlsen-Caruana in the press centre of the 2014 Vugar Gashimov Memorial.

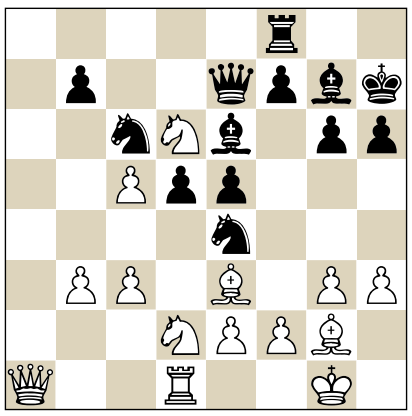
16...♗e6 17.b4 axb3 18.axb3 ♖xa1 19.♕xa1



19...♘e4!

Suddenly Black has very serious counterplay, and it is no longer clear at all who has the more promising chances. One problem is that 20.c4, which seemingly undermines the black centre, is very strongly met by 20...d4! 21.♗xd4!? ♘xg3!, when Black still might end up a pawn down, but with excellent compensation, as White's kingside pawns are weak, especially due to the pawn on h3. Even worse would be 20.♘xe4 dxe4 21.♘d2 f5, when the bishop on e3 feels very uncomfortable. Now 22.♘c4 f4 23.♗c1 indeed keeps the extra pawn, and Black's initiative after 23...e3!? is rather threatening. Magnus comes up with White's best choice.

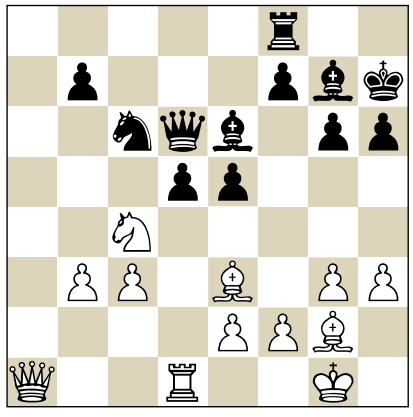
20.♘d2



20...f5?

This, however, is a grave mistake. 20...d4!? was Black's most complex and most interesting option. White can take on e4 with as many as three pieces, but in all cases (by taking on e3 and after fxe3 going ...f5) Black, despite being two pawns down, has excellent chances. Again the weakening h3 makes itself felt, as g3 is further weakened by fxe3. If anyone, it seems that Black has the better chances. But as 21.♗xd4 ♘xg3 leads to a similar scenario, it's not that clear how Magnus would have responded. Maybe with the ingenious 21.♗xh6!?, but after 21...♘xc3 Black keeps a strong initiative for the sacrificed pawn.

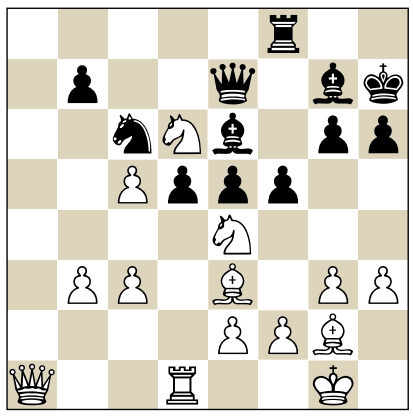
Both players seemed surprised at the press conference when confronted with the possibility of 20...♘xd6!?. They thought that after 21.cxd6 ♕xd6 22.♘c4



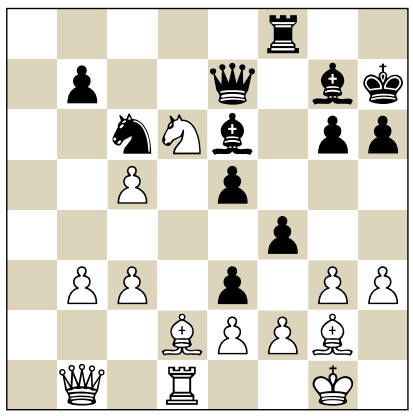
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

White has a nice position: although Black has got the pawn back, White has the initiative, and after 22...♕d8 23.♗b6! he has a considerable edge, as after 23...♕d7 24.♗xd5! ♗xd5 25.e4 ♕xh3 26.exd5 White's breakthrough in the centre is more relevant than his somewhat weakened king's position. However, as indicated by the computers, 21...♕d7!? was an interesting way of sticking to the positional pawn sacrifice by attacking White's pawn on h3, and if defended by 22.♔h2, then 22...e4, or even ...f5, with quite decent compensation.

21.♘2xe4



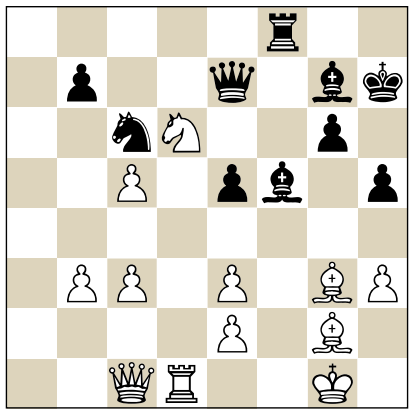
21...dxe4
Compared to the line after 20.♘xe4, the difference is that the white knight is now on d6, and not on d2. Which makes a huge difference. For a start, ...f4 is much less of a threat, as it does not trap the bishop on e3, and so White can do something much more useful than removing his d2-knight. And, of course, on d6 the knight is very well placed to begin with.
22.♕b1 f4
Objectively speaking, this move may be more weakening than doing any good. On the other hand, allowing White to stabilize even further offers very few long-term prospects, so Caruana goes for it, and hopes for the best.
23.♗d2! e3



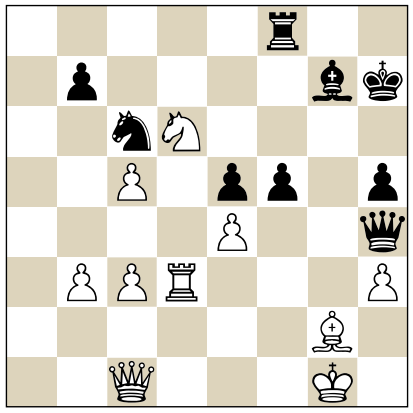
24.♗e1!
Maybe this is very modest-looking, but in this manner White keeps his kingside under control as well as he can, and it becomes very hard for Black to make any further progress. White will soon take over.

‘This was Caruana’s point. But Magnus has a nice resource up his sleeve.’

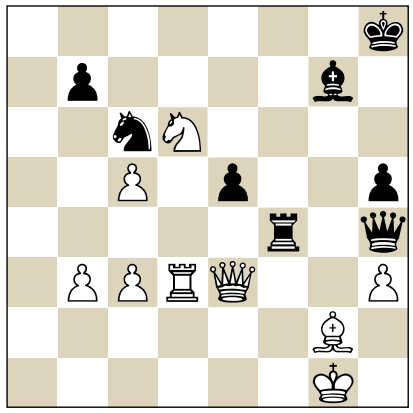
24...♗f5 25.♕c1 h5
Trying to confuse the issue. After 25... exf2+ 26.♗xf2 fxg3 27.♗xg3 White’s kingside is very solid and the queen on c1 protects the g5-square.
26.fxe3 fxg3 27.♗xg3



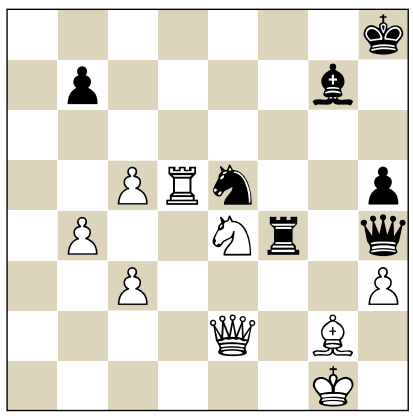
27...♕g5
This was Caruana’s point. By luring a white pawn to e3 he wanted to block the white queen and get access to the g5-square for his own queen, which looks like serious counterplay. But Magnus has a nice resource up his sleeve.
28.e4! ♕xg3 29.♖d3!
Forcing back the black queen before taking on f5, and thus not allowing ...♕g6.
29...♕h4 30.exf5 gxf5 31.e4
Although they may look rather threatening, the black knight and bishop do not participate in the attack, and Black has no way to exploit White’s somewhat weak king. With the text-move White gets access to f5, while not allowing ...e4, which would have activated both Black’s minor pieces.



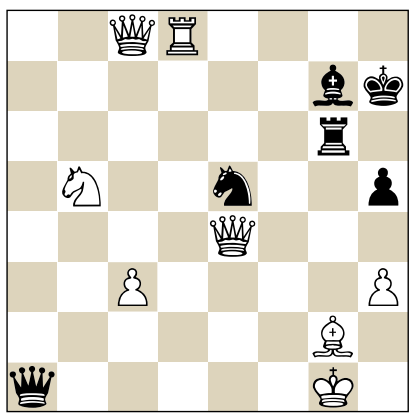
31...fxe4 32.♗xe4+ ♔h8 33.♕e3 ♖f4 34.♗g2
To compound his problems, Caruana was now also very low on time. But more importantly, White is a pawn up and he is better coordinated. The World Champion efficiently mops up the game and tournament victory.



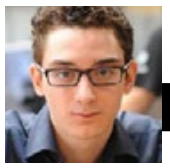
34...♕e7 35.♕e2 ♕h4 36.b4 e4 37.♘xe4 ♘e5 38.♖d5
Black has got the e5-square for his knight, but White is too solid, as his minor pieces protect everything around his king.



38...♔g8 39.b5 ♖f5 40.c6 bxc6 41.bxc6 ♕e7 42.♘d6 ♖g5 43.♘b5 ♕e6 44.♖d8+ ♔h7 45.♕e4+ ♖g6 46.c7 ♕a6 47.c8♕ ♕a1+



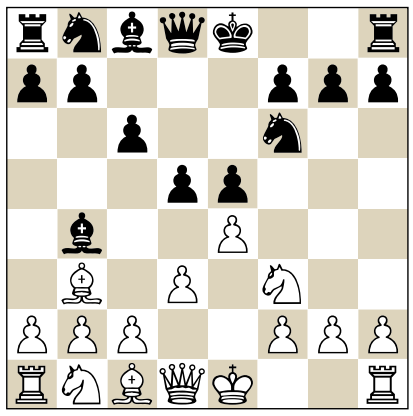
48.♔f2! This steers clear of all dangers, as after 48...♕b2+ 49.♔e1 Black has run out of meaningful checks, as the white rook can now retreat to d1, so Caruana resigned.
A nice win for Magnus, who showed good morale both in this game and in the second half of the tournament in general, after two tough losses.



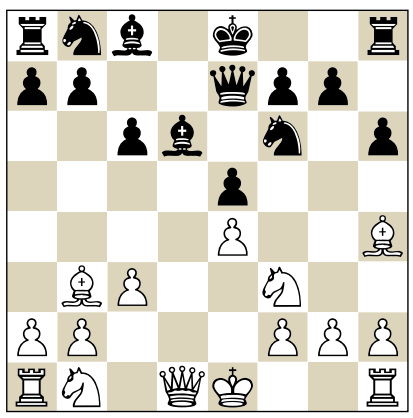
NOTES BY
Fabiano Caruana

Magnus Carlsen
Fabiano Caruana
St.Louis 2014 (3)
Bishop's Opening

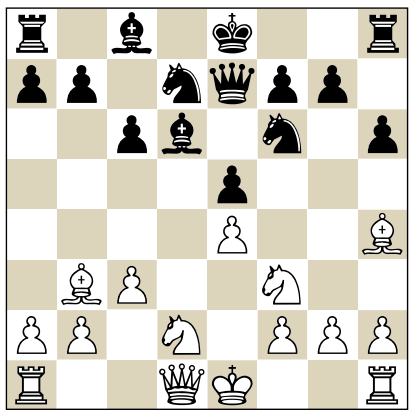
1.e4 e5 2.♗c4
Already a surprise!
2...♘f6 3.d3 c6 4.♘f3 d5 5.♗b3 ♗b4+
Modern theory suggests this subtle move, provoking c3. It may be the best.



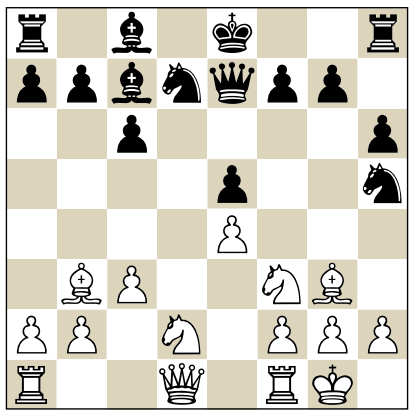
6.c3
6.♗d2 is the move the gods of chess (correspondence players) usually prefer. I would listen to them!
6...♗d6 7.♗g5 dxe4 8.dxe4 h6 9.♗h4 ♕e7



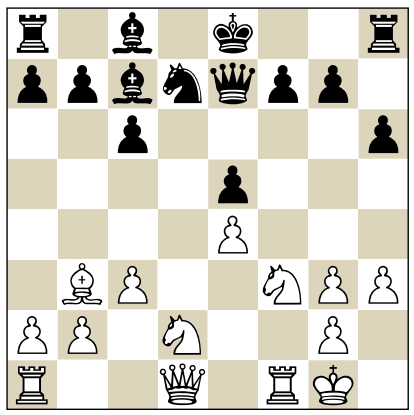
Although Magnus was playing relatively quickly, I couldn't understand the point behind his play. I felt I had effortlessly achieved a very comfortable position. The bishop on h4 is misplaced.
10.♘bd2 ♘bd7



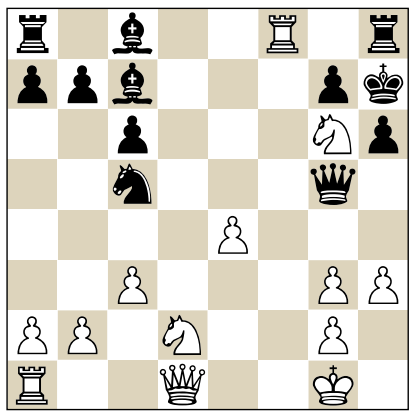
11.♗g3
This move was unanimously criticized after the game, but it's difficult to suggest an alternative.
11...♗c7 12.0-0 ♘h5
I think Magnus was under the impression that this could be met by ♘xe5. Now I gain the bishop pair for free and secure a clear advantage.



13.h3
Indeed, 13.♘xe5?? is not possible, as after 13...♘xe5 14.♕xh5 ♗g4 15.♕h4, 15...g5 traps the queen!
13.♘h4!? was probably a more accurate way of implementing the same idea: 13...♘xg3 (13...♘df6 14.♘f5 ♗xf5 15.exf5 ♘xg3 16.hxg3, and if White can gain control over e4, he should be fine) 14.fxg3 ♘f6 15.h3, and although Black has a certain advantage, White has his share of dynamic possibilities.
13...♘xg3 14.fxg3

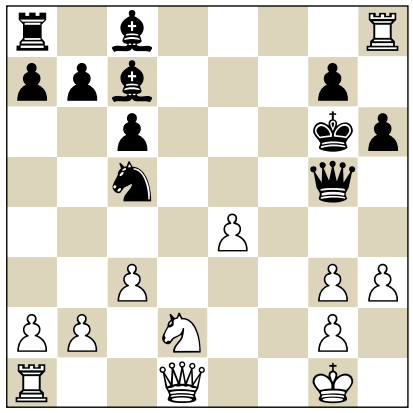


14...♘c5!?
A provocative move. There were safer ways to continue, but I was already playing for the maximum.
15.♗xf7+ Naturally, Magnus was looking for the first chance to change the course of play.
After 15.♗c2 a5, White's bishop has been forced into a passive position.
15...♔xf7 16.♘xe5+ ♔g8 17.♘g6 ♕g5 18.♖f8+ ♔h7
After a forced sequence, White is faced with a big choice: to capture on h8 with the rook or with the knight. Magnus fell into deep thought, and chose correctly:



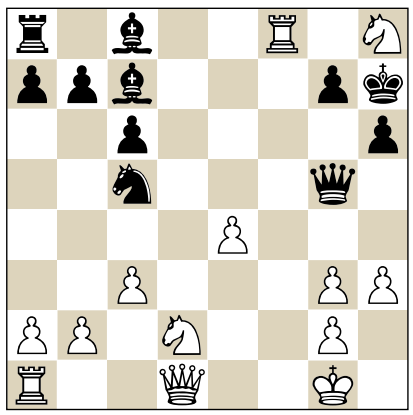
19.♘xh8
At first, I was under the impression that this move would allow me a crudely winning attack, but after more than half an hour of contemplation, I couldn't find anything clear-cut.
I was expecting 19.♖xh8+ ♔xg6, and didn't see an adequate defence for White:

'Although Magnus was playing relatively quickly, I couldn't understand the point behind his play.'



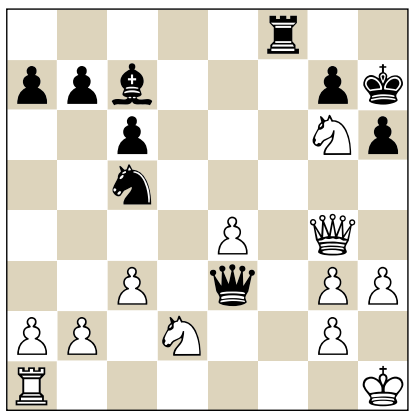
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

20.♘f3 (20.♘f1? ♗g4 wins on the spot. This was a crucial trick to spot in advance) 20...♕xg3 21.♕c2, and again White gets hit with the already familiar shot: 21...♗g4! and Black should win.



19...♗g4

Here, 19...♗xh3 20.♖xa8 ♕e3+ 21.♔f1 ♗xg2+ 22.♔xg2 ♕xg3+ 23.♔f1 was the first thing I considered. I have a draw in hand, but unfortunately not more: 23...♕h3+ 24.♔e2, and Black has nothing better than perpetual.
I also looked at 19...♕e3+ 20.♔h1 ♗g4 21.♕xg4 ♖xf8 22.♘g6 and stopped my calculation here, seeing that White is not losing material.



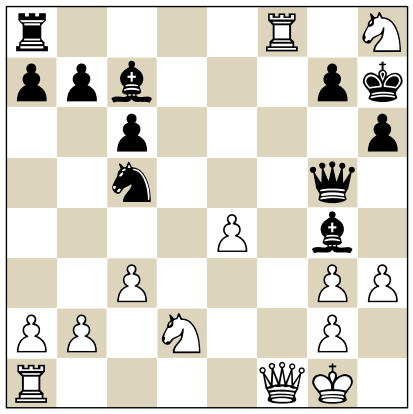
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

NEW IN CHESS

At the second Sinquefield Cup in St. Louis, Fabiano Caruana wrote history when he won his first seven games. In the end he scored 8½ from 10, finishing 3 (!) points ahead of runner-up Magnus Carlsen.

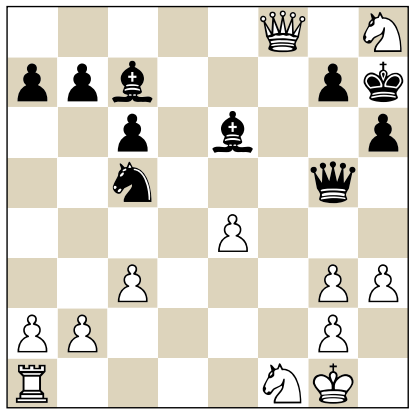
Nevertheless, Black retains winning chances with accurate play: 22...♖f7 (22...♖f6 23.♘f1) 23.♘f1 ♕g5! 24.♘h4 ♕xg4 25.hxg4 ♘xe4 26.♔h2 ♖f2, and White faces a long fight for survival.

20.♕f1



20...♘d3!?

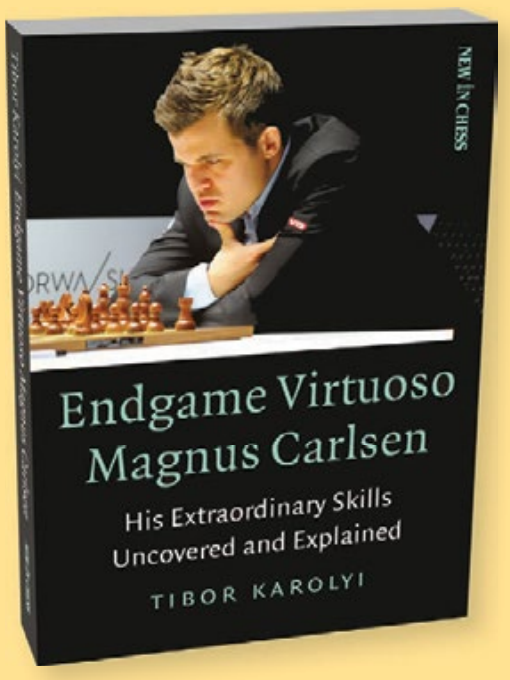
This spectacular move, which leaves nearly all the pieces on the board hanging, was the result of my long think on move 19. Impressive though it may look, it's not clear if it was the best chance to win.
There's also 20...♖xf8 21.♕xf8 ♗e6 (21...♕xd2 was the simplest solution: 22.hxg4 ♘d7! – this backwards move escaped my attention – 23.♕f3 ♘e5 24.♕f5+ ♔xh8, with a pleasant advantage, although it won't be easy to win) 22.♘f1



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

and now with 22...♕d8 (or 22...♕f6) 23.♕xd8 ♗xd8, I will finally pick up the paratrooper on h8 and emerge with a clear advantage in the ending. In general, I was too focused on attacking and forgot that I can quietly trade queens and win a piece.

How does he do it?



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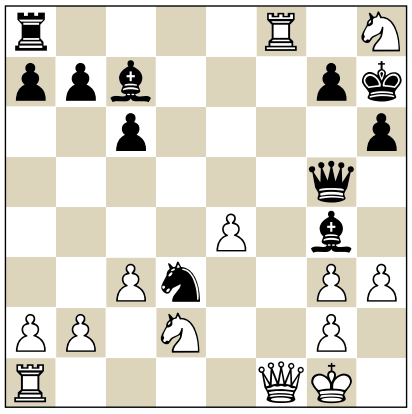
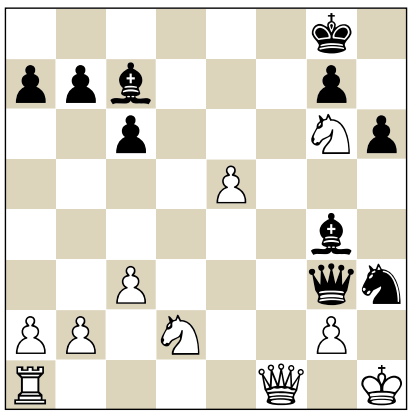


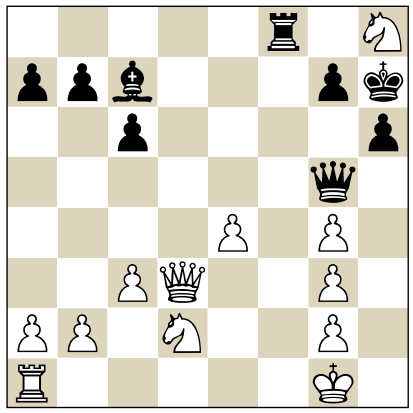
21.♕xd3
21.♖xa8? loses trivially: 21...♕e3+ 22.♔h1 ♘f2+ (22...♕xg3 also wins, but why complicate things?) 23.♕xf2 ♕xf2 24.hxg4 ♕xd2, and White will probably have to sacrifice everything to avoid getting mated.
21.♘g6!? is an even more spectacular move which I saw during the game but didn't take seriously enough. As it turns out, it was a very good defensive chance: 21...♕e3+ 22.♔h1 ♕xg3 23.e5 ♖xf8 24.♘xf8+ ♔g8 25.♘g6 ♘f2+ 26.♔g1 ♘xh3+ 27.♔h1



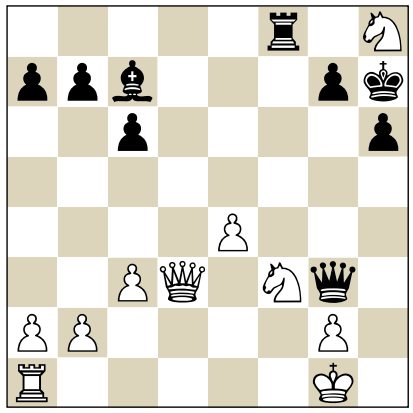
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

27...♘f2+ 28.♔g1 ♗e6 29.♘e7+ ♔h8 30.♘g6+ ♕xg6 31.♔xf2, and after a long (and apparently forced!) sequence, Black has wound up down an exchange, with a tremendous initiative to show for it. With accurate defence, White will probably be able to defend.

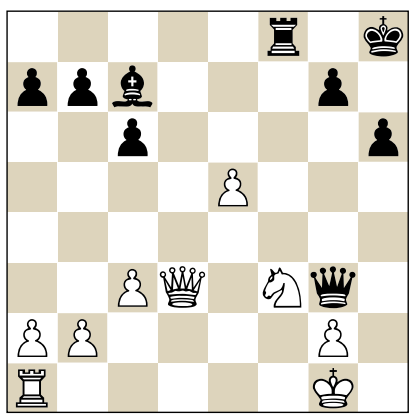
21...♖xf8 22.hxg4
The knight on h8 is dead, and White's tripled pawns make a comical impression, so it's very likely that material equality will be restored in short order. Black of course has a clear advantage due to White's weak king, but the passed e-pawn is a powerful trump. Magnus immediately starts to work on advancing it.



22...♕xg4 23.♘f3 ♕xg3 Maybe not the most accurate. 23...♔xh8 24.e5 ♕xg3 would transpose to the game, while avoiding 24.♘f7.



24.e5+? I'm very surprised that Magnus missed his chance to play 24.♘f7!, a move which concerned me during the game, because I felt that I had squandered much of my advantage. I was planning on playing 24...♖xf7 25.e5+ ♕g6 26.♕xg6+ ♔xg6, with a slight edge in the ending, but hardly enough to win against accurate defence.
24...♔xh8

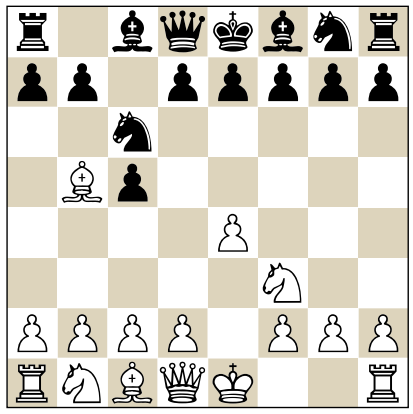


25.e6?! This pawn will be difficult to maintain.

NOTES BY
Peter Heine Nielsen

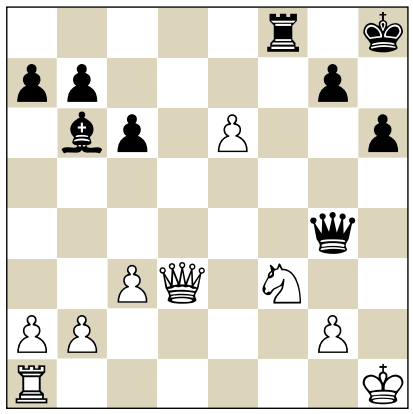
Fabiano Caruana
Magnus Carlsen
Wijk aan Zee 2015 (6)
Sicilian Defence

This game was played in the sixth round, with both players being on 3/5. However, their routes had been quite different. Magnus had a bumpy start followed by two wins, while Caruana had started off with 2½/3, only to find out, like Carlsen, that playing the Dutch against Wojtaszek is probably not a good idea.
But, of course, apart from the impact on the tournament standings, this is a game between the two top players in the world.
1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5!?

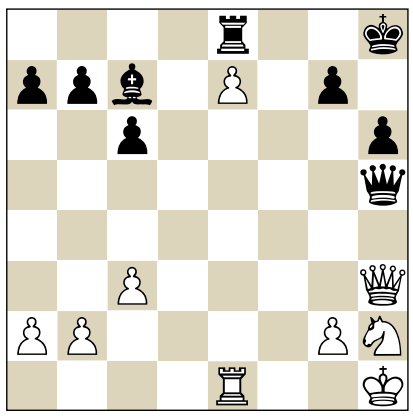


These days one would almost say that this is the main line against the Sicilian, which it has been since the World Championship match between Vishy Anand and Boris Gelfand in Moscow 2012, but in their previous encounter Caruana played 3.d4 and got a promising position after 3...cxd4 4.♘xd4 g6 5.c4 ♘f6 6.♘c3 d6 7.f3!?. Even so, this fascinating game ended in a draw.
3...g6
Gelfand repeatedly played 3...e6, but since the match he has, for example, lost to Caruana, and Black seems to be moderately suffering in this variation from a theoretical standpoint.
4.♗xc6 dxc6 5.d3 ♗g7 6.h3 ♘f6 7.♘c3 b6 8.♗e3

The machine suggests 25.♖f1!, which looks odd but is really a very clever idea. White is overprotecting the knight on f3 and preparing to meet ♖f4 by ♕d7: 25...♗b6+ (25...♗xe5 26.♘xe5 ♖xf1+ 27.♕xf1 ♕xe5 28.♕f7 will probably end in a draw by perpetual) 26.♔h1 ♖f4 27.♕d7! covers h3 and defends against ♖h4.
25...♗b6+ 26.♔h1 ♕g4



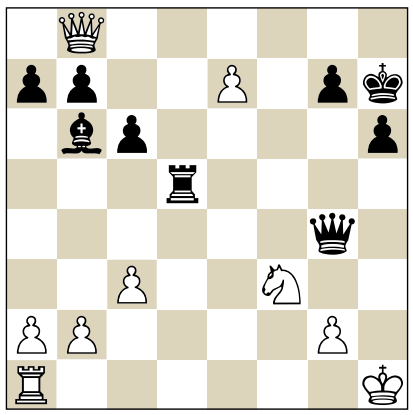
27.♕d6!?
A great move! I only considered 27.e7 and thought I would easily win the pawn, but this move threw me into a panic! Suddenly I got low on time and couldn't see a clear way to cement my advantage.
In case of 27.e7 ♖e8 28.♖e1 ♕h5+ 29.♘h2 ♗c7 30.♕h3



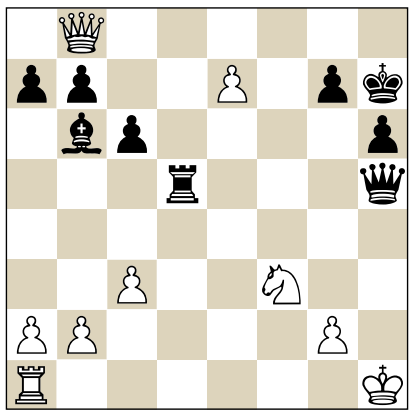
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

30...♕xh3 31.gxh3 ♔g8, rounding up the e-pawn, was the end of my calculation. In fact, even stronger was the beautiful 30...♖xe7!.
27...♖d8!
Thankfully, I managed to find a very nice idea to win the game!
28.♕e5 ♖d5 29.♕b8+ ♔h7 30.e7

At first this had seemed extremely worrisome, but then I noticed the following:



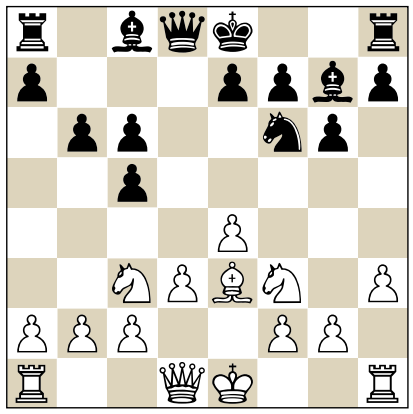
30...♕h5+
30...♖h5+?? 31.♘h2 would be an unfortunate turnaround.



31.♘h2??
A bizarre blunder. Magnus was obviously under a lot of pressure and probably hallucinated something. At least he could have kept the game going with 31.♕h2, although his chances of survival were slim.
After 31.♕h2, 31...♕e8! was what I had seen on move 27. Now the pawn finally falls: 32.♖e1 (32.g4!? is the last chance to keep the game going, but down a pawn and with a weak king White won't be able to hold on) 32...♗f2! and next ...♖h5 or ...♖d1 wins.
31...♖d1+ 32.♖xd1 ♕xd1+ 33.♘f1 ♕xf1+ 34.♔h2 ♕g1+
White resigned.

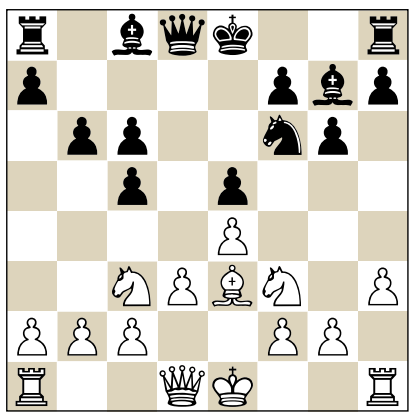
Magnus and I have been trading blows for some time, but after losing 2 in a row against him (at the Rapid World Championship in Dubai and the Olympiad in Tromsø – ed.) I was very happy to get this win in.

‘Caruana takes his role as challenger to Magnus’s supremacy seriously and plays very ambitiously.’



8...e5?!

Standard moves like 8...♘d7 and 8...0-0 are better. Magnus’s move, while positionally justified, has a tactical flaw.

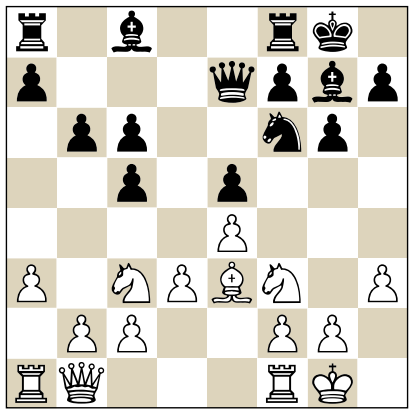


9.0-0?! After 9.♘xe5! ♘xe4, 10.♕f3! is the point, as now 10...♘d6 is impossible because Black has played ...b6, so c6 is hanging.

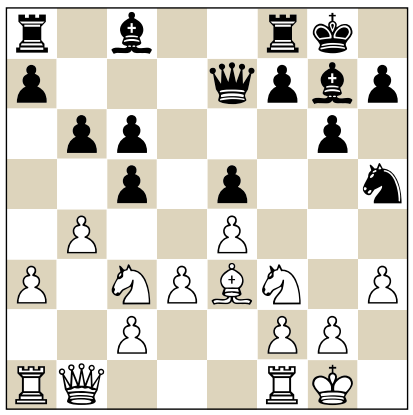
Caruana thought for a while before playing 9.0-0. Maybe he was calculating the line 10...f5 (instead of 10...♘d6) 11.♗f4 ♕e7 12.dxe4 ♗xe5 13.0-0-0 0-0 14.♗xe5 ♕xe5 15.exf5 ♗xf5 16.♕xc6 ♕f4+, when it looks as if Black gets back the pawn with a decent position, but after 17.♖d2! the rook protects f2, and there is no way to exploit the pin on the d-file.

9...0-0 10.a3 ♕e7 11.♕b1!?

Caruana takes his role as challenger to Magnus’s supremacy seriously and plays very ambitiously. White’s pawn-push b4 will indeed put pressure on the black queenside, but the queen strays far from its king.



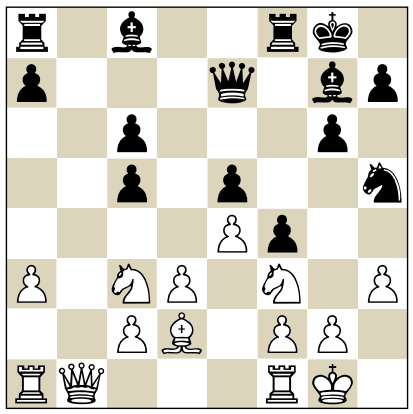
11...♘h5 12.b4



12...f5!? Not at all the top move of the computer, but an interesting and principled one.

The engines like 12...♘f4, possibly followed by 13...g5. This is a relevant idea for Black, but maybe White can fight for the initiative with 13.bxc5 bxc5 14.♗xf4!? exf4 15.e5!? with a very interesting position.

13.bxc5 f4 14.♗d2 bxc5



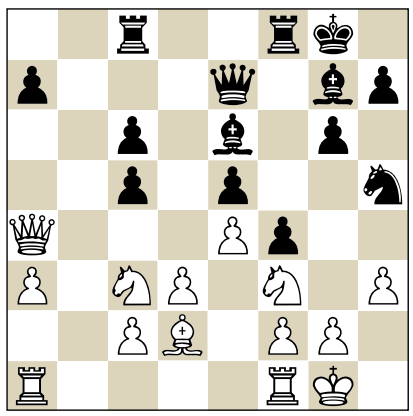
Black’s strategy is risky and very similar to a King’s Indian. The doubled pawns on the c-file are not only weak but probably just lost. After 15.♘a4, for example, things look problematic: 15...g5 even allows 16.♘xc5!? and if Black takes back on c5 then 17.♗b4, followed by 18.♗xf8 and 19.♘xg5, is better for White.

But Black can just ignore the pawn with 16...g4! 17.hxg4 ♗xg4 18.♘h2 ♗c8!, stopping ♕b7, with a very promising attack for Black. White’s extra pawn is of no immediate relevance, and when a black rook appears on the g-file the white king is in serious danger.

15.♕b3+ ♗e6 16.♕a4

Caruana comes up with an interesting concept. He disturbs the black queenside, gaining time, because since it is possible to sacrifice the c5-pawn, losing c6 is an entirely different matter, as this would give White’s knight access to d5.

16...♖ac8



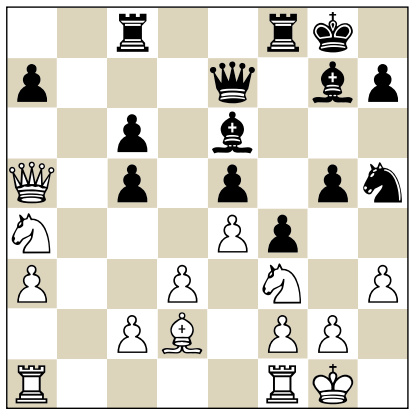
17.♕a5

17.♕a6!? also makes sense: 17...g5 18.♖fb1 g4 (18...♖c7 seems too slow, as after 19.♘a4 g4 20.hxg4 ♗xg4 21.♗a5 ♗xf3 22.gxf3 ♕g5+ 23.♔f1 ♘g3+ 24.♔e1! White would escape just in time) 19.♖b7 ♕f6, and despite White’s invasion on the 7th rank, Blacks counterplay seems enough – the position after 20.hxg4 ♗xg4 21.♘h2 (21.♔f1 ♘g3+!) 21...♗e6 is immensely complex, but I would say Black has the better practical chances.

17...g5 18.♘a4

Black’s queenside is collapsing, and Caruana has arranged it in such a way that his queen will be able to take on c5, gaining time, since Black obviously can’t allow a queen swap.

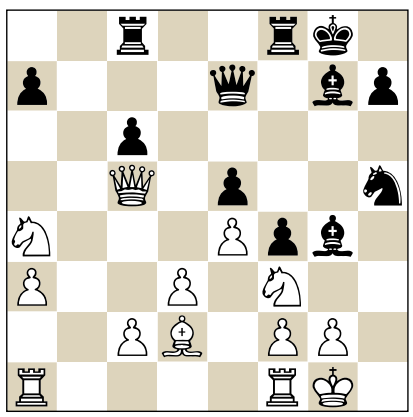
Even so, Black's initiative is serious, as the white queen, while active on c5, is still cut off from what Carlsen seems to think is the most important factor: the vulnerable white king.



18...g4 19.hxg4

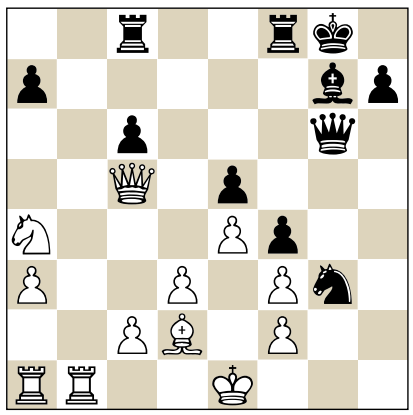
19.♕xc5 ♕f6 will just transpose.

19...♗xg4 20.♕xc5



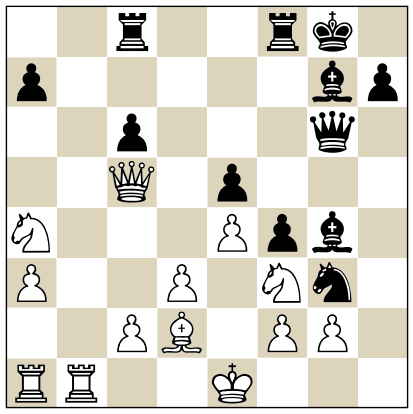
20...♕f6

A very interesting position, and critical for the outcome of the game. It is very tempting for White to try and escape with his king to the queenside. 21.♖fb1 seems the most logical move, when after the direct 21...♗xf3 22.gxf3 ♕g6+ 23.♔f1 ♘g3+, 24.♔e1!



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

is a very typical idea, when the black attack seems to peter out. More promising is 21...♕g6!? when 22.♔f1 ♘g3+! 23.♔e1 (23.fxg3 fxg3, and Black's attack is just too strong), and now 23...♘xe4 24.♕c4+ ♗e6 25.♕xe4 ♗f5 26.♕c4+ ♗e6 is a computer line ending in a perpetual. But much more dramatic is

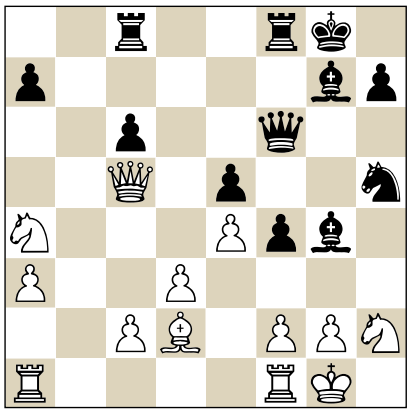


ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

23...♕h5!? 24.♗b4 ♕h1+ 25.♔d2 ♕xg2 26.♘xe5 ♗xe5 27.♕xe5 ♕xf2+ 28.♔c3 ♘e2+ 29.♔c4, when the white king may have reached safety, or may be in trouble after 29...c5!?.

Very interesting and fun chess indeed. But maybe Magnus would have kept it sane and would have just played 21...♖f7. This is also a good reply after 21.♖fe1, with serious compensation for the sacrificed pawn.

21.♘h2



21...f3!?

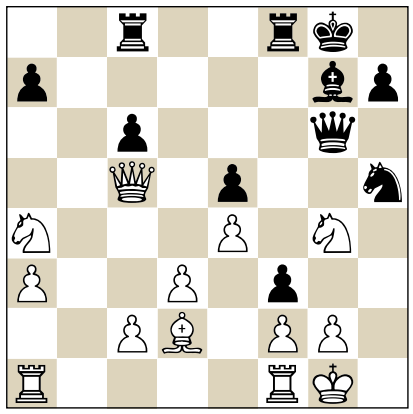
Very direct, but 21...♕g6 also deserved attention, with the idea of continuing in King's Indian fashion after 22.f3 ♗h3 23.♖f2 ♖f7, with 24...♗f8 and 25...♖g7 to come. White can try and interfere with 24.♗c3, but then Black quietly defends with 24...♖e8 and is ready for a regrouping. And again, while the position is complex, practically speaking it seems more pleasant for Black.

Similarly, 21...♕h4 also deserves attention, in order to bring the black rook to the kingside via f6 in time.

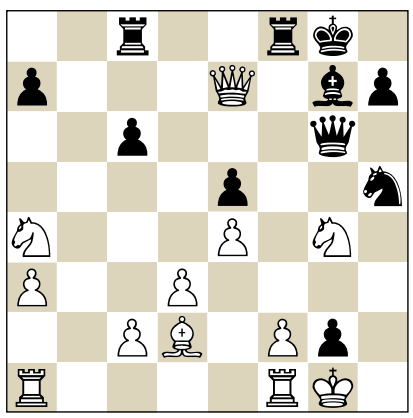
ALINA L'AMI

At the 2015 Tata Steel Chess Tournament in Wijk aan Zee, another fierce clash between the numbers 2 and 1 in the world resulted in an impressive victory for the top-seed.

22.♘xg4 ♕g6



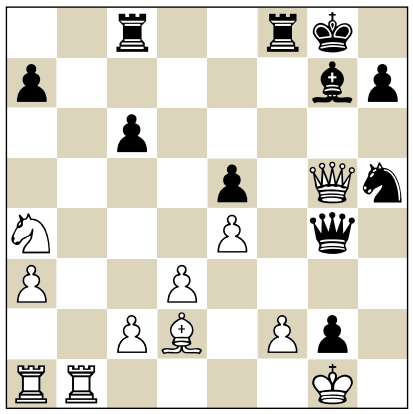
Carlsen's idea looks almost decisive. If Caruana tried to hang on to his extra piece with 23.♘e3, 23...♘f4! would win instantly for Black.
But Caruana exploits the drawback of ...f3, viz. that the white queen can now suddenly take part in the defence:
23.♕e7! fxg2



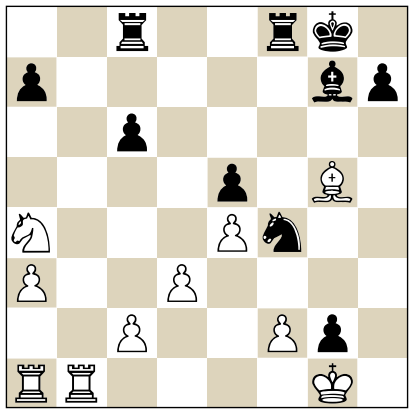
24.♖fb1?!
A logical move, as later on ♖b7! can be relevant. However, better would have been 24.♖fe1!? as after 24...♕xg4 25.♕g5 ♕xg5 26.♗xg5 ♘f4, 27.♖e3!? is now available, when White defends and the position seems balanced. However, 25...♕h3 26.♕xg2 ♕e6 is possible, when ...♖f6-g6 or ...♔h8/...♖g8 will start an attack on the g-file, with the usual assessment: unclear, but promising for Black, as the pressure is very much on White.
24...♕xg4 25.♕g5 ♕e2
Here 25...♕h3? is much less efficient because of 26.♕xg2 ♕e6 27.♖b7! – it seems that Black is in trouble, but only due to a line that would be almost impossible to find in the actual game: 27...♖f6 28.♘c5! ♕d6 29.♔h1! (preparing ♖g1) 29...♕xc5 30.♖g1 ♕f8 31.♕g4, and Black has no real defence.

'Caruana used up basically all his remaining time and played the last moves on his increments. But his position was beyond salvation.'

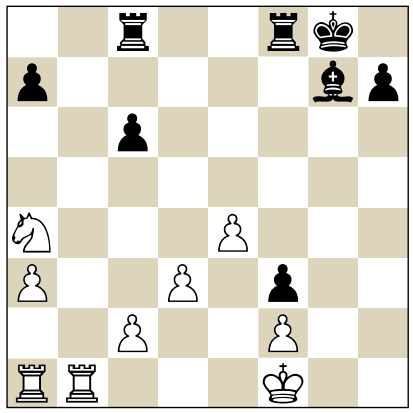
26.♕e3 ♕g4 27.♕g5



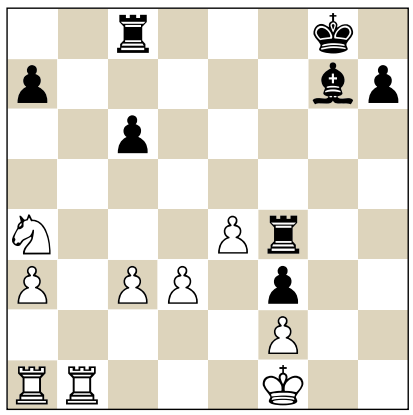
27...♕xg5!?
From a tournament perspective, a draw with Black against Caruana would not be a bad result, but this move is simply played on its objective merits. While White probably should be able to defend, it is Black who has the initiative, even after the queens have been exchanged.
28.♗xg5 ♘f4



29.♗xf4?
A losing blunder. Caruana should have defended with 29.♔h2!? when Magnus thought that 29...♗f6 30.♗h6 ♗g7 would force a repetition. Interesting would be 29...h6 30.♗h4 h5, as now 31.♗g5 ♗f6 32.♗h6 ♖f7 leaves the bishop on h6 in trouble. However, 31.f3!?, intending to put the bishop back on f2 if necessary, looks reasonable for White, even if the computer can easily overestimate the importance of the black kingside pawns.
29...exf4 30.♔xg2 f3+ 31.♔f1



31...♖f4!!
An excellent move, highlighting the difference between 29.♗xf4 being a decent exchange sacrifice or a losing blunder. The white king is now simply trapped, the point being that after 32.♔e1 ♖d8! 33.♔d2 is impossible due to 33...♖xe4, so the white king is just stopped short of escaping to the queenside. Now 34.♘c3 almost looks good enough, but 34...♗h6! mates.
Caruana used up basically all his remaining time and played the last moves on his increments. But his position was beyond salvation.
32.c3



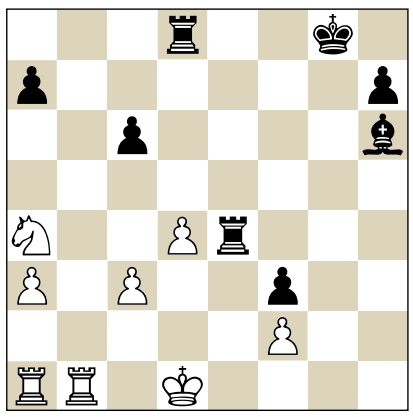
32...♖d8!
Again Magnus finds the killing move.

If now 33.♖d1 then 33...♖h4 34.♔e1 ♗h6 mates. White's king is trapped and there is no defence against the threat of ...♖h4 and ...♗h6, mating.

33.d4 ♗h6

Certainly winning, and Magnus had seen 35...c5 at this point. Even so, 33...♗xd4!! would have been a nice way to finish the game, as 34.cxd4 ♖h4 forces mate. The point is 35.♔g1 ♔h8!, and 35.♔e1 ♖xd4 leaves White only with meaningless checks to postpone the inevitable mate.

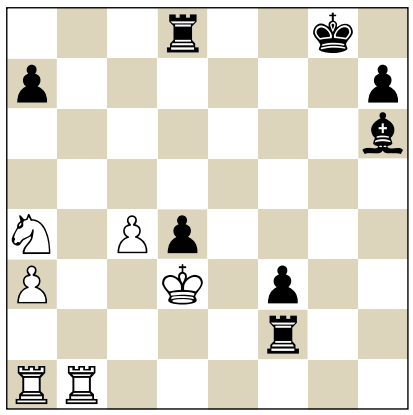
34.♔e1 ♖xe4+ 35.♔d1



35...c5!

Without this the black win would not be trivial. As 36.♘xc5 ♖e2 now wins instantly, since ♖b2 is no longer available, White loses an extra pawn. And, even worse, Magnus also gets to the second rank with force.

36.♔c2 cxd4 37.♔d3 ♖e2 38.c4 ♖xf2



39.♖d1?! The last chance was 39.♖b2, but 39...♖xb2 40.♘xb2 ♖b8 is still completely winning for Black.

39...♖e2 And as ...♖e3+ and ...d3 will follow next, the black passed pawns will decide. So Caruana resigned.

NOTES BY

Simen Agdestein

Fabiano Caruana
Magnus Carlsen
Stavanger 2015 (2)
Ruy Lopez, Berlin Defence

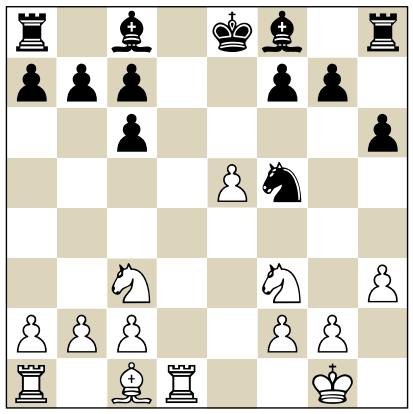
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 ♘f6

Magnus succeeded very well with the Berlin in the two World Championship matches against Anand, but in Shamkir 2014, he suffered a defeat against Caruana.

4.0-0 ♘xe4 5.d4

Caruana hasn't given up trying to get an advantage in the normal main line.

5...♘d6 6.♗xc6 dxc6 7.dxe5 ♘f5 8.♕xd8+ ♔xd8 9.h3 h6 10.♖d1+ ♔e8 11.♘c3



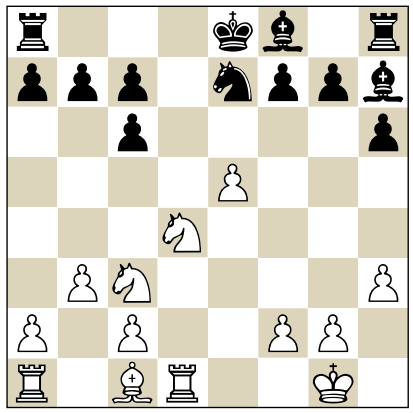
11...♘e7

In Shamkir, Magnus played 11...♗d7, but after 12.♗f4 ♖d8 13.♘e4 ♗e7 14.g4 ♘h4 15.♘xh4 ♗xh4 16.♔g2 ♗e6 17.f3 b6 18.b3 c5 19.c4 White had a comfortable edge

12.b3

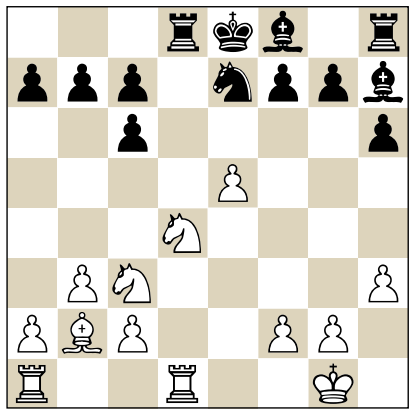
The same combatants had also had this position in Baden-Baden in February this year. Caruana then placed his bishop on f4. This time it goes to b2. It's really hard to understand all the nuances in this line.

12...♗f5 13.♘d4 ♗h7!?



It's very rare to see the bishop on this square in the Berlin. I don't know if this was an over-the-board inspiration or a prepared idea, but Magnus is a creative player and likes to explore new territory.

14.♗b2 ♖d8



15.♘ce2!?

Caruana didn't seem surprised and quickly played this knight manoeuvre. Judit Polgar played 15.e6 against David Howell in the European Team Championship in Warsaw 2013 and seemed to be very close to something.

15...♘d5 16.c4 ♘b4

A bishop on h7 and a knight on b4 seems like a very good team, but it soon turns out that the essence here is the white knights in the centre.

17.♘f4 ♖g8 18.g4

'I don't know if this was an over-the-board inspiration or a prepared idea, but Magnus is a creative player and likes to explore new territory.'

continued on page 44

Interview Sergey Karjakin

‘For half a year I was only thinking about the match’

The World Championship match is undisputedly the highest peak in competitive chess. Only very few have been up there, and Sergey Karjakin is one of them. Two years after he narrowly lost to Magnus Carlsen in New York, the Russian sat down for a talk with **DIRK JAN TEN GEUZENDAM** to speak about a unique experience and to share his thoughts on the forthcoming title match in London. ‘Clearly, I want Fabiano to win.’

What happens when you win the Candidates tournament and qualify for the World Championship match? Does the match and everything connected with it totally take over your life, so that there is little else that you can think about?

Sergey Karjakin listens with an amused smile as I try to take him back to the moment when he won the Moscow Candidates in 2016, the moment his life changed. When I am done, he lets out a laugh and wholeheartedly agrees.

‘Yes, it was exactly like this! When I won the Candidates, that night I could not sleep at all, something that had happened to me only a few times in my life. I was so excited and I was already thinking about the match. Most of the time those next six months, I only thought about the match. Galia (his wife) even joked that I thought much more about Magnus than about my family. And that was true (laughs). Even when I played some tournaments after the Candidates, I just saw them as training tournaments for the match. For example, when I came to Bilbao, I didn’t even look up who was playing. I knew that Magnus was playing and some others, but I didn’t have any idea who the others were. I saw Anish (Giri) and said, oh, Anish, hi, I didn’t know you were here (laughs).’

Once you had qualified, your first task was to compose a team…

‘That was important, but not too difficult, because I already had a very nice team. I had been working with Dokhoian and Motylev for a long time, and I had started working with Potkin before the Candidates. And I also already worked with Shakh Mamedyarov. So I invited them once again and said, let’s keep going. We had our training camp in Miami, which was very cool, actually. About 20 days. I also consulted Kramnik and spoke

Sergey Karjakin and Magnus Carlsen in action at the Fulton Market Building in Lower Manhattan. 'Since neither of us got anything as White, we both found it very hard to win a game.'

with Karpov, because he has played many matches and has lots of experience.'

Did they say anything special that you thought back to later?
'(Starts laughing) Play good chess! They had some good advice, of course, but I hope I will use some of it in the future. Or maybe I will sell it (laughs). My team consisted of about 10 people. I had a doctor, I had a man who cooked for me in New York. That was very important. New York suited me fine, because I like big cities, but the food is not like in Russia. I didn't like the food in New York much; there were only a couple of places that I liked. Having someone to cook for you also saves time, because you don't have to go out. Besides the people I have mentioned there were some chess players that worked at home and were in touch via Skype.'

Probably including some that we never learned about…
'Yes, you could say that.'

Do people have any idea of the impact it has on you to have to play a world championship match? What were the things you hadn't expected? That were crazier than you had thought?
'Crazier than I had thought was that the tension was so high, something you never have in super-tournaments. Fighting for first place in a super-tournament cannot be compared with the world chess title match. It's something completely different. What I had not expected either and which came as a very nice surprise was that there was so much TV coverage in Russia about the match. When I came back to Russia, I was much more popular than before. I only found out then, because my friends did not disturb me during the match.'

For half a year you were thinking about the match. What were you thinking about?
'I had to go very deeply into his games, and to think about where I would be able to win the match, in what phase of the game. Whether I would be able to get something special in the opening or whether I should fight somewhere else. It was very important to think about such things before the match, not during the match.'

'Fighting for first place in a super-tournament cannot be compared with the world chess title. It's something completely different.'

‘Fabiano is showing brilliant chess and if he will be in such form as he has been showing most of the year he will have chances, that is clear.’

Did the planned strategy help you during the match?
‘Yes, I think it helped. I was very well prepared with the black pieces. I don’t think I got any bad positions as Black, not a single time. At least not in the classical games. But the problem was that I forgot my ideas as White a few times and I was unable to get any advantage with white, too. And since neither of us got anything as White, we both found it very hard to win a game.’

Is Fabiano Caruana’s situation before the match similar to yours?
‘No, the difference is that Fabiano is showing brilliant chess now. He is clearly number two. Or he is two and three with Mamedyarov, who also has been doing great. Fabiano is showing brilliant chess, and if he is in the form he has been showing for most of the year, he will have chances; that is clear. But somehow I have the feeling that his tournaments are very much about form. I remember how badly he played in Wijk aan Zee, where he scored -3, and then he bounced back in Berlin and started winning. What I want to say is that he has to be very careful about his form. If he is in bad form, Magnus will be the clear favourite.’

You have often stressed the importance for your career of your switch to Russia in 2009, because of all the support you got. It feels as if Caruana’s switch back to the US and his support in St. Louis makes a difference too.
‘Yes, I think it was very important for him to be in a chess place, to work with good company. I also think it’s very important for him that he has a great second in Rustam Kasimdzhanov, because I know him well. He worked with me a little bit and I know how good he is. I think he is very fortunate to have such a great second. Honestly speaking, I think that Kasimdzhanov is more interesting than, for example, Nielsen.

‘I am sure there are more trainers. I am pretty sure that Fabiano works with Dominguez and some other American grandmasters. He will clearly be well prepared, but Magnus is also very clever sometimes, and he will try to go for unexpected positions. He will also do good work in the openings, so it will be very difficult to catch him there.’

You were the underdog in New York, but in classical chess you tied the match. What feelings did that leave you with when you think back?
‘I believe I played an interesting match. Many people were claiming that I should have won the match, but they were forgetting that I was losing in the third and fourth classical games. If I had lost those games, it could have been over. I believe that basically I deserved to make a draw in the classical part, because sometimes I was lucky, sometimes he was lucky. But I think I made a big mistake, which I only realized after the match. When I played some training games with Mamedyarov, we played, like, a hundred blitz games, but we played blitz and not rapid games. I completely forgot there is this part after the classical games in case of a tie. When I thought about the tiebreak,

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I somehow thought about blitz, and we only played blitz.

'This was a clear mistake, since I was unable to switch from classical chess to rapid chess. My other mistake was that I forgot my preparation a couple of times. I was quite well prepared, but a couple of times I was unable to show the ideas that I had. I should have given Magnus more problems in the openings. We did a lot of work before the match and we had to cover a lot, and it was simply too many lines, too many variations. And I forgot.'

In New York, Carlsen chose to quickly draw Game 12, because he wanted to play rapid. And indeed there he prevailed. This may be Caruana's fear, because he seems to be the underdog if the games are sped up. Is he trailing ½-0 at the start of the match?

'No, I don't think so. If he plays some training games, I don't see big problems for him, because he can play well in rapid. But if they go on to the blitz, then Carlsen is the clear favourite. There the difference is too great.'

What would be your main advice to Caruana?

'He has Kasim, who will explain him everything. Just play as well as he has been playing this year. I think it will be important for him to fight for the initiative and try to pose Magnus problems in the opening right from the start. If he doesn't get anything out of the opening, then Magnus will be more comfortable.'

Would you have been ready to work for either of them?

'Not for Magnus maybe (laughs). I don't have any personal problems with Magnus, but clearly I want Fabiano to win the match. I just want to see some new faces and I want Magnus to have to win the Candidates tournament, which is actually very difficult. I am not sure if Magnus would be able to qualify (by winning the Candidates tournament). So I think the match is highly important for Magnus.'

MARIA EMELIANOVA

Sergey Karjakin: 'I won the world title in rapid and blitz, but it's hard to compare it to a classical match against Magnus.'

When he won the title, he said he wanted to be World Champion for 20 years, which sounded a bit optimistic…

'Well, honestly speaking, it sounded crazy. I don't want to say anything negative about Vishy (Anand), but I believe that for Magnus it was far, far more difficult to win the Candidates in London than to win the match against Vishy. He only won the Candidates thanks to some tiebreak which was not that obvious. It was very difficult for him.

'I think that the difference between Magnus, Fabiano and Shakh is small, and Magnus is no longer as clearly the number one player that he was before. But it might change again, we will see. Many players are no longer afraid of him. They used to have a lot of respect, but now people are fighting very hard. (With a smile) Maybe things changed after the New York match, because they realized that even I was able to fight against Magnus.'

Was playing the World Championship match easily the most fantastic experience in your career? Is it hard to compare it with anything?

'Yes, I think so. I won the world title in rapid and in blitz, but it's hard to compare it to a classical match against Magnus. But I am not thinking about it anymore, I am thinking more about the future. (With an apologetic smile) But journalists keep reminding me of it, so I cannot forget.'

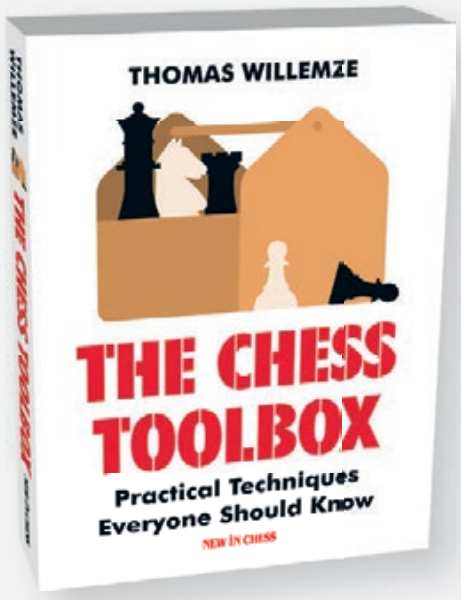
You say you hope Caruana will win. Who do you believe will win? If you had to put money on it?

'(Laughs) If you are asking me for money, then I put 60 percent on Magnus and 40 percent on Fabiano.' ■

'It will be important for him to fight for the initiative and try to pose Magnus problems in the opening right from the start.'

continued from page 39

A no-nonsense guide



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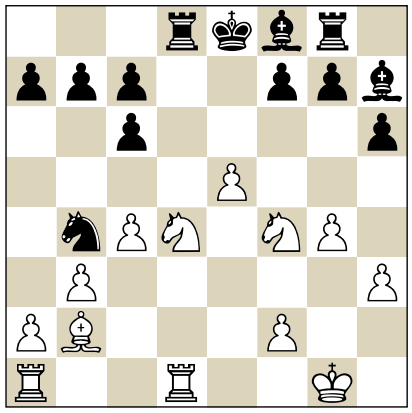
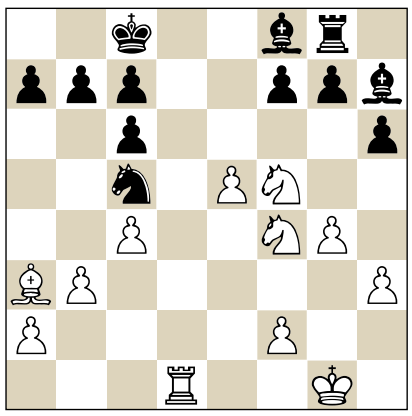
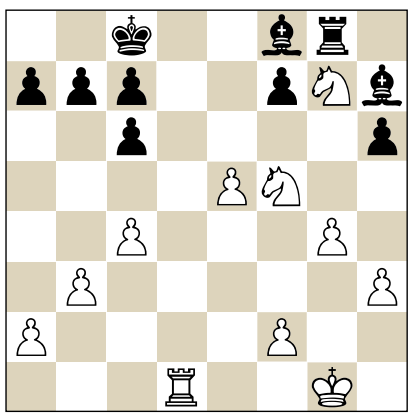


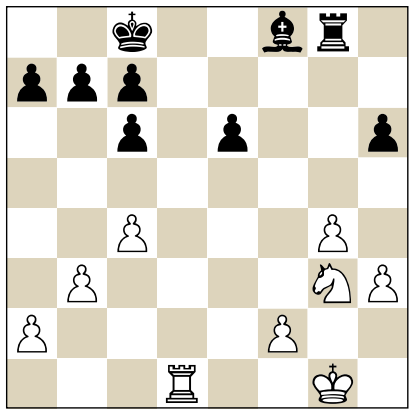
18...♘a6 Now the manoeuvring perhaps becomes a bit too sophisticated. During the game I was wondering who would profit from exchanging knights after 18...♘c2, but I presume it would be White. The black position is not very dynamic.
18...♗e7, with the idea of ...♗g5, is also very relevant here.
19.♘f5 ♘c5 20.♖xd8+ ♔xd8 21.♖d1+ ♔c8 22.♗a3



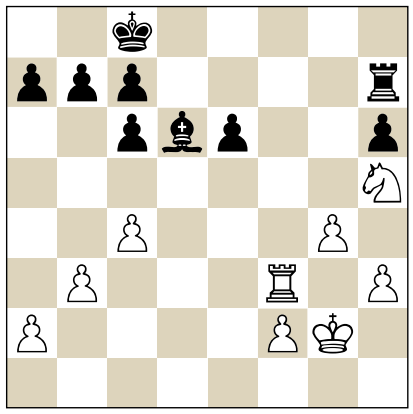
22...♘e6? Magnus was very dissatisfied with this move, and rightly so. He pointed out 22...b6, with patient play.
23.♘xe6 ♗xa3
Magnus hadn't seen 23...fxe6 24.♗e7!.
24.♘exg7 ♗f8



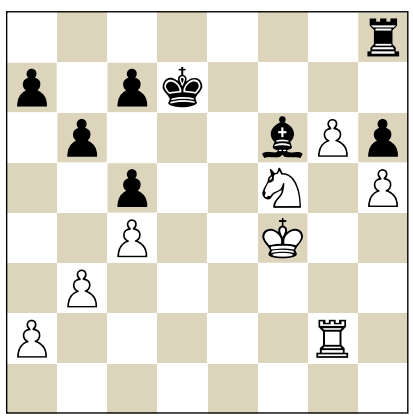
25.e6
Simplest. The endgame of rook against the bishops after something like 25.♔h2 ♖xg7 26.♘xg7 ♗xg7 27.f4 also seemed good for White, but there's no need to take any risks.
25...♗xf5 A sad necessity.
26.♘xf5 fxe6 27.♘g3



This is just sad for Black.
27...♗e7 28.♔g2 ♖f8 29.♖d3 ♖f7 30.♘h5 ♗d6 31.♖f3 ♖h7
Magnus was hoping for some blockade, but Caruana completes the job with flawless technique.



32.♖e3 ♖e7 33.f4 ♗a3 34.♔f3 ♗b2 35.♖e2 ♗c3 36.g5 ♔d7 37.♔g4 ♖e8 38.♘g3 ♖h8 39.h4 b6 40.h5 c5 41.g6 ♖e8 42.f5 exf5+ 43.♔f4 ♖h8 44.♘xf5 ♗f6 45.♖g2



Black resigned.

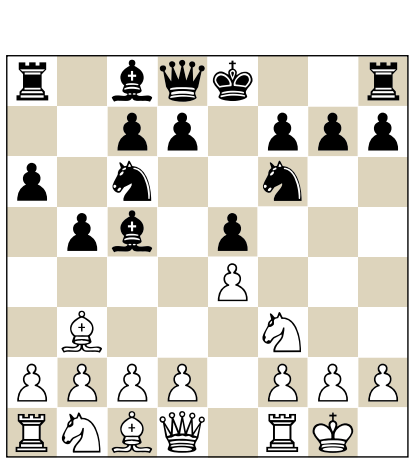
NOTES BY
Peter Heine Nielsen

Fabiano Caruana
Magnus Carlsen
Douglas 2017 (8)
Ruy Lopez

While many players had planned their 'exit-strategy' from the World Cup with the Isle of Man's organizers in advance, Magnus wanted to quickly wash away the unexpected loss against Bu Xiangzhi in Tbilisi, and an open tournament with most of the world's elite present seemed like an excellent opportunity.

The early rounds saw the expected scares with his risk-taking and unusual openings, but in the end he was rewarded by leading the field, half a half point ahead of his closest pursuers, before this game in the penultimate round.

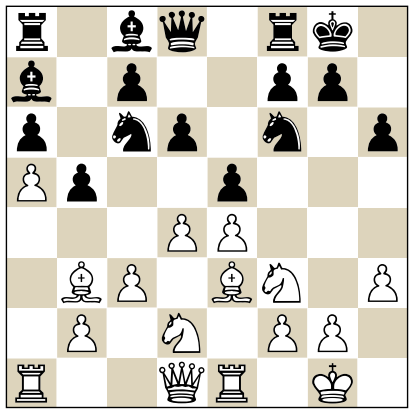
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 b5 6.♗b3 ♗c5



Magnus played the Møller Defence in the crucial Game 9 of the match in New York, and had to pull off a spectacular save after getting into trouble out of the opening. So he had parked the line until this game.

7.c3 d6 8.a4 ♖b8 9.d4 ♗b6 10.a5 ♗a7 11.h3 0-0 12.♗e3 ♖a8 13.♖e1 h6 14.♘bd2

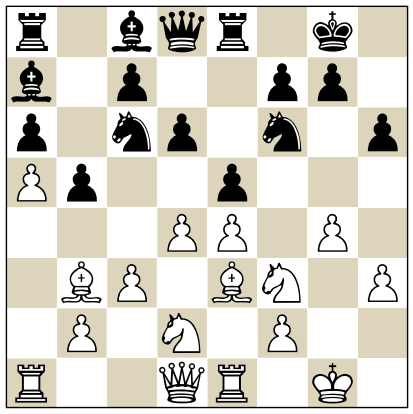
Caruana had had this exact position the day before, also with the white pieces, against Gawain Jones, who preferred 14...exd4 15.cxd4 ♘b4. From a positional point of view, Black is doing fine, but Fabiano launched a well-prepared attack with 16.e5! and won an excellent game.



14...♖e8

Curiously, Magnus prefers the move Caruana himself played against Karjakin in 2013! That game continued with the pawn sacrifice 15.♘f1, but the American had prepared an even more cunning idea:

15.g4!?



The idea of attacking a pawn on h6 with g4 is not exactly new, but ideally White would prefer a rook and not his king on g1! Here, however, White's control of the centre means that it is difficult for Black to launch an attack against White's now somewhat weakened king. And more pressingly, it is not easy to see how White develops next. There is no point in hiding that the move took the World Champion by surprise, as he now thought for more than half an hour to come up with a common-sense reply.

15...♕e7?!

The computer indicates two ways for Black:

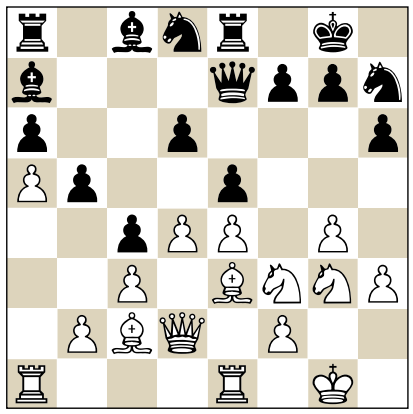
A) 15...exd4 16.cxd4 ♘b4 in the style of Jones is logical, but now, with the rook on e8, 17.♗xf7+ ♔xf7 18.♕b3+ is possible, although 18...♘bd5 19.exd5 ♗b7 20.♕d3 ♕d7!, as indicated by the computers, seems to hold. 17.g5!? also deserves attention, with wild tactics emerging after 17...c5! 18.e5!? ♘fd5 19.♘e4, with a complete mess, for which Caruana certainly would be prepared.

B) 15...♕d7!? is very interesting, combining defending the knight on c6 (and thus intending 16...exd4 17.cxd4 ♘xe4 18.♘xe4 ♖xe4, as 19.♗d5 is not a threat against c6) with ...♘xg4 motifs cropping up. White can try to get an advantage with 16.g5!?, but Black can still play 16...exd4 17.cxd4 ♘xe4 18.♘xe4 ♖xe4 19.♗d5, and while 19...♖e8 now loses to both 20.gxh6 or 20.g6, 19...♕xh3! forces a draw, as on 20.♗xe4 ♕g4+ both 21.♔f1 and 21.♔h1 leave White's king exposed after 21...♕xe4, and 21.♔h2 ♕h5+ is a perpetual. White can play it slow with 16.♕c2, but then 16...♘d8 is a good way to regroup.

16.♘f1! A very strong move, leaving Black in a strategically very difficult position. Tactically, the problem is that 16...exd4 17.cxd4 ♘xe4 loses a piece to 18.d5! ♗xe3 19.♖xe3 ♘e5 20.♘xe5 ♕xe5 21.f3, which means that Black has to take it slow.

16...♘d8 17.♘g3 c5 18.♕d2 c4 19.♗c2 ♘h7

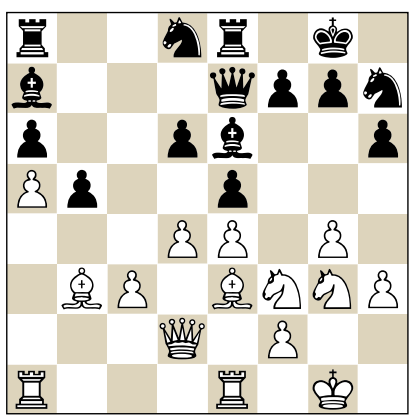
'There is no point in hiding that the move took the World Champion by surprise, as he now thought for more than half an hour to come up with a common-sense reply.'



20.b4 An interesting moment. The computers at first indicate that 20.b3! is the move, and that 20.b4 somewhat lets White off the hook.

But obviously the players both seemed to think that sealing off the queenside was to White's advantage, and after a while the machine also agrees that after 20...♕f6!? 21.♔g2 ♘e6, 22.h4! still gives White a considerable advantage, since Black's intended 22...♘hg5 is prevented.

20...cxb3 21.♗xb3 ♗e6



Up to this point, Caruana has given a powerful performance, but things are about to take a dramatic turn. After 22.♘f5!, the reply 22...♕c7 may look as if White has failed to make progress, but 23.♗d5! leaves him close to strategically winning: 23...♗xd5 24.exd5 f6 loses tactically to 25.♗xh6, since White's attack will be unstoppable after 25...gxh6 26.♕xh6 ♔h8 27.g5 fxg5 28.♘xd6.

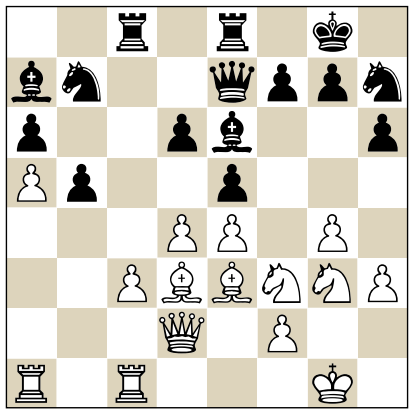
23...♖c8 24.♖ac1 also leaves Black stuck for moves, and biting the bullet and taking on f5, for example as early as on move 22, means that White will have a basically unstoppable attack down the g-file.

22.♗c2? ♖c8 23.♗d3 ♘b7 24.♖ec1

ALINA L'AMI

Isle of Man 2017. A cunning opening idea got Fabiano Caruana a promising game against Magnus Carlsen, but when the American wavered, the World Champion decidedly took over to score a key victory.

Not managing to follow through with his aggressive intentions, Caruana has shifted to a defensive set-up, keeping a5 and c3 protected, and planning d5 and c4, should Black place his queen on the obvious square c7. But Black has another way of pressurizing the a-pawn:

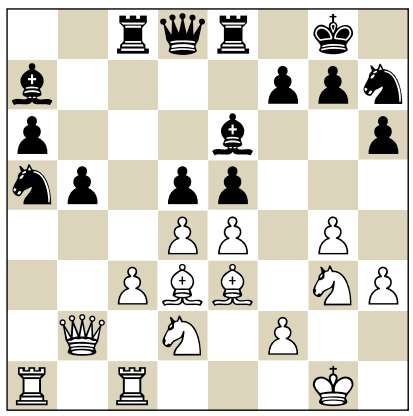


24...♕d8!

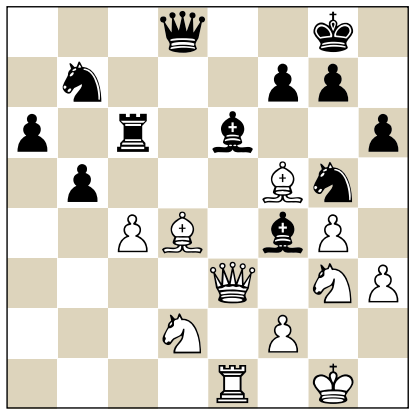
Short of time, White now collapses. 25.d5! still was the best move, as after 25...♗xe3 26.♕xe3 ♗d7 27.c4! ♘xa5 28.cxb5 ♖xc1+ 29.♖xc1 axb5 30.♕a7! it seems like Black's best is 30...♘b3, when White gets the pawn back with 31.♖b1 ♘c5 32.♗xb5 and should be able to save the draw. In time-pressure, however, Caruana goes astray:

25.♕b2 ♘xa5 26.♘d2 d5!

Not only is Black a pawn up, but the white centre is collapsing as well.



27.♖e1 ♗b8 28.exd5 ♗xd5 29.♗f5 ♖c6 30.♕a3 ♘b7 31.♖ad1 exd4 32.♗xd4 ♘g5 33.c4 ♖xe1+ 34.♖xe1 ♗e6 35.♕e3 ♗f4!

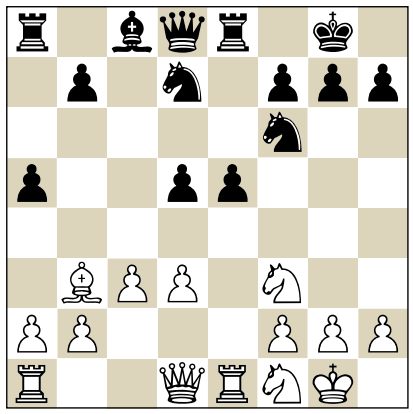


The bishop that White had gone to such lengths to exclude from the game has returned efficiently and delivers the final blow. As 36.♕xf4 loses to 36...♘xh3+ and 36.♕e2 ♗xd2 37.♕xd2 to 37...♘f3+, Caruana resigned.

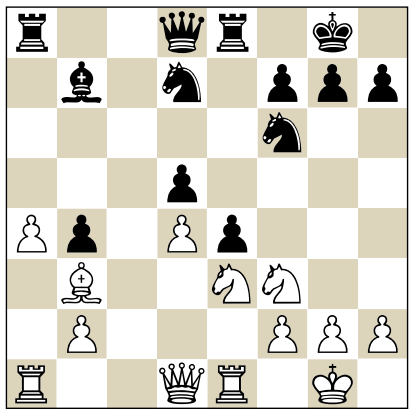
NOTES BY
Simen Agdestein

Magnus Carlsen
Fabiano Caruana
Stavanger 2018 (1)
Bishop's Opening

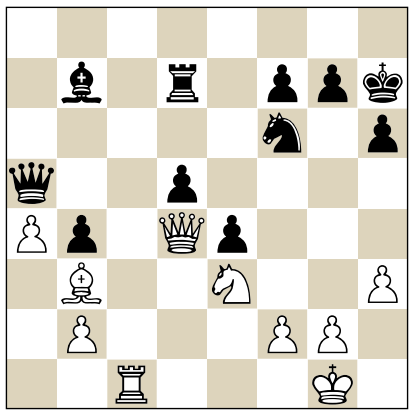
1.e4 e5 2.♗c4 ♘f6 3.d3 c6 4.♘f3 d5 5.♗b3 ♗b4+ 6.♗d2 ♗xd2+ 7.♘bxd2 a5
'A little unusual', Magnus mentioned after the game. 7...♗g4 and 7...♘bd7 seem to be the normal moves.
8.c3 ♘bd7 9.exd5 cxd5 10.0-0 0-0 11.♖e1 ♖e8 12.♘f1



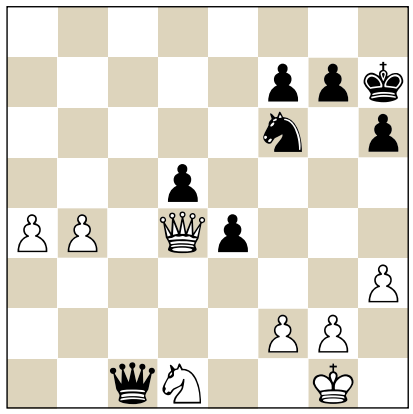
I must admit that in the live broadcast we struggled to understand Magnus's idea around here, but in hindsight I realize it's about making Black's bishop weak. White will play d4 at some point, which would kind of force ...e4, and then White will break with his f-pawn.
12...b5
As the only person present with supposed chess competence in the commentary room – in the first three days, the broadcast was led by Knut Skeie Solberg, a non-chess-playing journalist – I claimed over and over again that all Black's problems had started with this move. After 12... b6, Black would have had no worries, I said. After hearing Magnus explain things afterwards, I realized my understanding was very shallow. For me it was absolutely wonderful having the players come after the games to explain things, although I sometimes felt a bit stupid about the things I had said.
13.a4 b4 14.cxb4 axb4 15.♘e3 ♗b7 16.d4
The thematic break, which reduces Black's bishop to a sad wreck obstructed by the central pawns.
16...e4



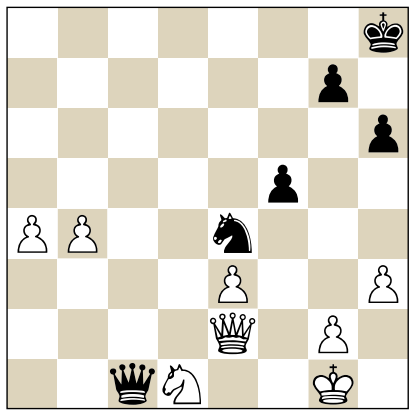
17.♘e5!? We looked at 17.♘h4 g6 18.g3, with the idea of playing the knight to f4, but Magnus seemed to consider only 17.♘d2 and f3, or perhaps ♗c2 and ♘b3 as the alternative. The text-move is truer to his style.
17...♘xe5 18.dxe5 ♖xe5 19.♕d4
Here we, or rather I, were absolutely convinced that Magnus had a great position. The judgements changed quickly. In general, it was easy to take the side of the player who'd just moved.
19...♖e7 20.♖ac1 ♖d7
Now I wasn't so sure anymore, because it actually dawned on us that is was hard for White to make progress. Black's idea is to be ready for ...d4, when White takes on b4.
21.♖ed1 h6 22.♖c5 ♖a5 23.♖xa5 ♕xa5 24.h3 ♔h7 25.♖c1



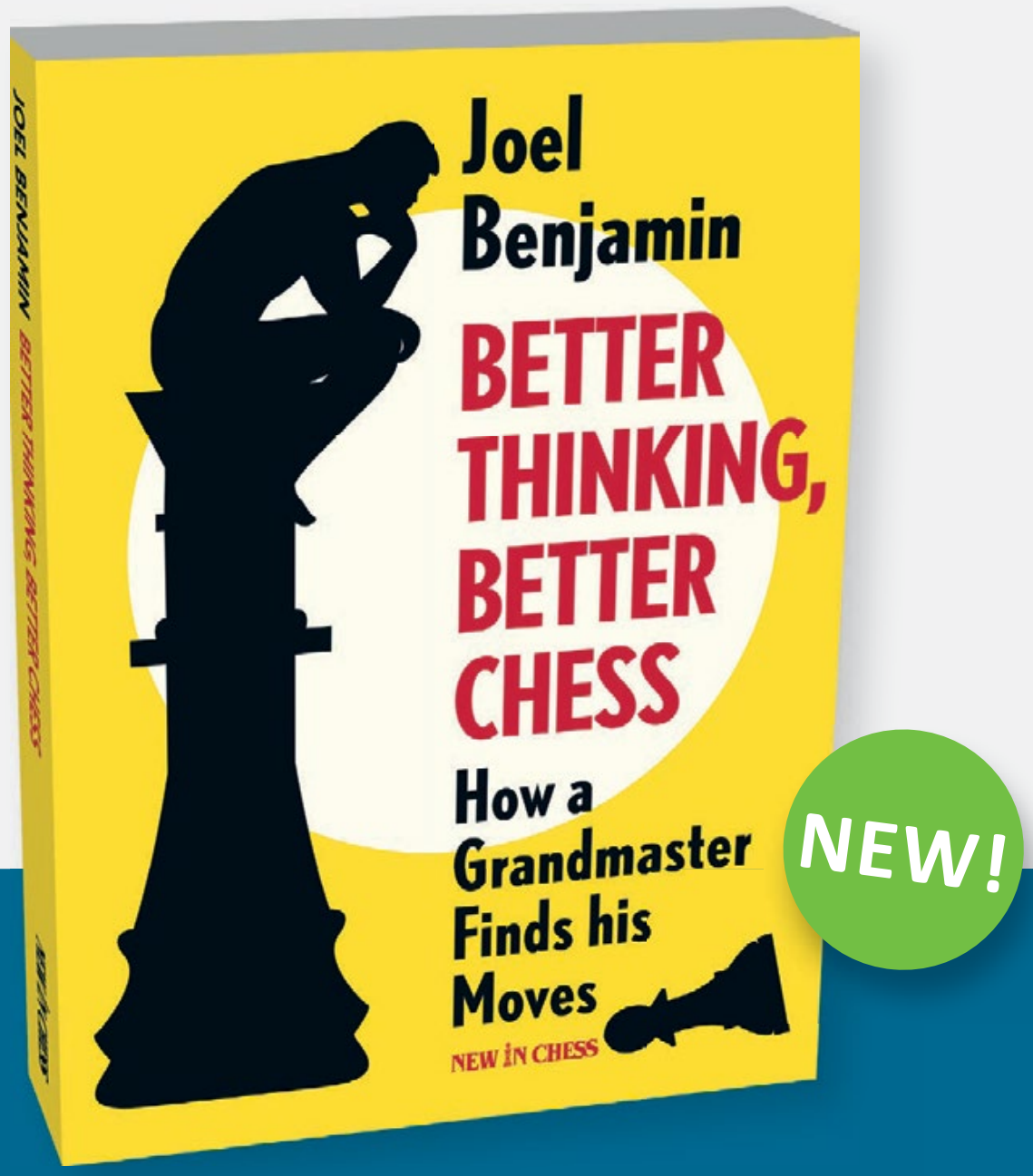
25...♖c7??
'Just a blunder', according to Magnus. He thought the position was balanced if Black defended passively. Black's b-pawn surely is weak, but White cannot easily take it without unleashing the big potential of the black pieces. The moment White plays ♘c2, Black can send his knight to e6 with great prospects.
26.♖xc7 ♕xc7 27.♕xb4 ♕c1+ 28.♗d1
I was struggling to understand what was wrong with 28.♔h2. Magnus showed a line afterwards that wasn't totally convincing, but according to the computer, Magnus's choice was the best one.
28...♗a6 29.♕d4 ♗e2 30.♔h2 ♗xd1 31.♘xd1 ♕c7+ 32.♔g1 ♕c1 33.b4



White has won back the pawn and can just run with his queenside pawns, while Black is still struggling with the passive knight on f6.
33...e3 A desperate attempt that seemed to be doomed to fail, especially since Caruana was getting into serious time-trouble.
34.fxe3 ♘e4 35.♕xd5!
Magnus had the time to think and quickly found there was no danger.
35...♘d2 36.♕f5+
To go to e2 via d3 was also possible.
36...♔h8 37.♕g4 f5 38.♕e2 ♘e4



Improve your decision making process!



Finding strong moves doesn't simply depend on how much you know about chess. What's more, greater conceptual knowledge makes choosing a move more complex as it increases the number of directions, including wrong turns, your mind can take.

Optimizing your thought process is the all-important issue. Three-times US Champion Benjamin has written an extremely interesting book that teaches you to choose between two attractive continuations, avoid taking the wrong direction at the start of your deliberations, know when it is necessary to spend more time, recognize unlikely moves, understand when you need to sacrifice material, and much more.

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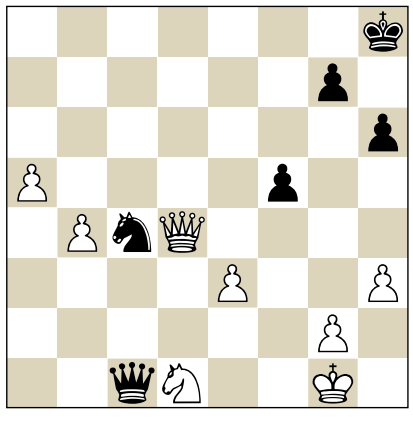
I felt big distress from my co-commentator around here, because I was totally engrossed in the analysis of Hikaru Nakamura and Ding Liren and their game and totally missed that Magnus and Caruana were nearing the climax in their game. But now, finally, we had switched over to the ongoing game. Nakamura instantly pointed out White's next move.

39.♕e1! ♕a1 40.a5

Everything is covered and Magnus is just two pawns up.

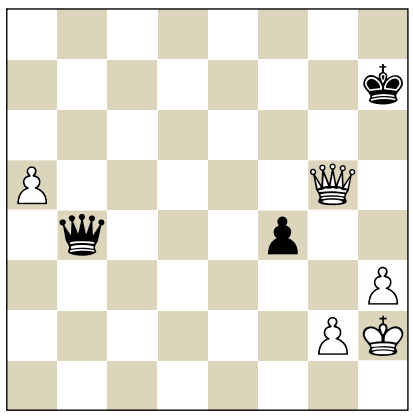
40...♘d6 41.♕d2 ♘c4 42.♕d4 ♕c1



43.♔f1

Magnus said afterwards that he may not have played the endgame in the most accurate way, but it doesn't matter. The following queen ending is easily winning.

43...♘xe3+ 44.♕xe3 ♕xd1+ 45.♔f2 ♕c2+ 46.♔g3 g5 47.♕e5+ ♔h7 48.♔h2 f4 49.♕d5 ♕a4 50.♕f7+ ♔h8 51.♕g6 ♕xb4 52.♕xh6+ ♔g8 53.♕xg5+ ♔h7



We were wondering why Caruana didn't just resign here and instead let himself be tortured for another hour or so. 'He had every right to do it;

LENNART OOTES

Norway Chess 2018. For the fourth tournament in a row, Magnus Carlsen and Fabiano Caruana met in the very first round. The World Champion won, but it's anyone's guess what this result says about their upcoming match.

I would have done the same.' Magnus said. To us, it just seemed to emphasize Caruana's position as the underdog. But it gave us an excellent chance to hear a little bit of my co-commentator's view on the chess world. Knut is not a complete novice. He had also appeared in this role during the Carlsen-Karjakin match in New York, when Agon were seeking a journalist to lead the official broadcast and looked to Norway, since we actually are in the forefront of making chess popular on TV. Knut Solberg Skeie got the job and followed the whole thing with Judit Polgar as his chess expert. It's certainly interesting to hear his point of view on how to popularize chess on TV. I found it absolute wonderful to go through the games with the players, but does that make good TV? I presume most of our followers were chess players, and hopefully they also liked to listen to the players more than to us, but it's good to reflect a bit on what works on TV and what doesn't.

54.♕h5+ ♔g7 55.♕g5+ ♔h7 56.h4 ♕d6 57.♕h5+ ♔g7 58.♕g5+ ♔h7 59.h5 f3+ 60.g3 f2 61.♕g6+ ♔h8 62.♕xd6 f1♕ 63.♕h6+ ♔g8 64.♕e6+ ♔h8 65.♕e3 ♕b5 66.♕c3+ ♔h7 67.g4 ♕d5 68.♕c7+ ♔g8 69.♔g3 ♕e6 70.♕d8+ ♔h7 71.♕d3+ ♔h8 72.a6 ♕e5+ 73.♔h3 ♕a1 74.♕d8+ ♔h7 75.♕e7+ ♔h6 76.♕e3+ ♔h7 77.a7

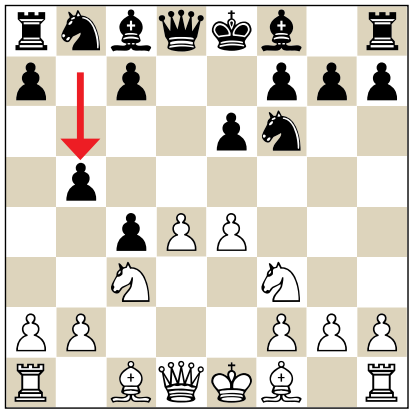
And finally Caruana resigned.

After the game had finished, we started talking about the implications this result could have for the upcoming world championship match. 'A match is playing against one man, and this is like leading 1-0,' we babbled. The players, however, claimed it didn't play any role. By coincidence, Carlsen and Caruana had also met in the first rounds of the previous three tournaments they played in together, London, Tata Steel and Grenke. In Wijk aan Zee, Magnus won the Tata Masters with a plus-5 score, while Caruana finished in the bottom part of the standings with minus-3. In the most recent of these three events, in Baden-Baden (Grenke), and now again in Stavanger, Caruana (despite losing his first-round game) finished first ahead of Magnus. It's not so obvious who's got a grip on whom. But it does seem to be clear that, come November, the world's two uncontested best players will fight for the World Championship, which hasn't happened since the encounters between Kasparov and Karpov in the 1980s. ■

SECRETS OF OPENING SURPRISES

A 'Fab' surprise

Jeroen Bosch



5...b5!?

'This is a fairly novel system that has slowly moved up the Elo-echelons.'

So far, 2018 has been a 'Fab year' for Fabiano Caruana. The American has been very successful in all his classical tournaments (with the notable exception of Wijk aan Zee), and because of his victory in the Berlin Candidates he is now entitled to play a much anticipated match with the World Champion.

Caruana is an eclectic opening expert who feels comfortable in a wide array of opening variations, although he usually goes for the main lines. In Round 3 of the Sinquefield Cup, he adopted a fairly novel system in the Queen's Gambit. With his stamp of approval, it deserves SOS scrutiny.

Shakhriyar Mamedyarov
Fabiano Caruana
St. Louis 2018 (3)

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 d5 4.♘c3 dxc4

A common way to reach the highly theoretical Vienna Variation. With his next move Mamedyarov stresses that he is up to the job.

5.e4

We will concentrate on 5.e4 in this article, but briefly mention the most important alternatives:

■ After 5.♗g5 you can enter the Vienna Variation with 5...♗b4 6.e4 c5, or go for the even sharper Botvinnik Variation with 5...c6 6.e4 b5. However, if you are tempted to take up the present SOS line, I would advise you to play 5...a6!? 6.e4 b5, which transposes to 6.♗g5 below (the note to 6.e5).

■ Another point of Black's move order is that, compared to the regular Queen's Gambit Accepted, White has already developed his knight to c3, which means that Black equalizes rather easily after 5.e3 a6 6.♗xc4 b5 7.♗e2 (7.♗b3 ♗b7 8.0-0 c5; 7.♗d3 ♗b7 8.0-0 c5) 7...♗b7 8.0-0 ♘bd7, as in Nikolic-Carlsen, Berlin 2015, for example. And 6.a4 c5 7.♗xc4 ♘c6 8.0-0 ♗e7 9.♕e2 cxd4 10.♖d1 e5! 11.exd4 exd4 12.♘xd4 ♘xd4 13.♕e5 ♕d6! is another well-known equalizer. This was, for instance, the course of play in Eljanov-Caruana, Douglas 2016.

5...b5!?

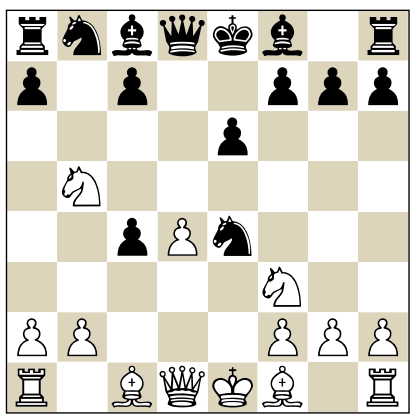
This is the reason why we are covering this game in this column! Rather than go for the Vienna Variation with 5...♗b4 (as Caruana did twice this year versus Aronian, beating him with Black in the Candidates), the American defends the pawn he has just taken, aiming to trade his b-pawn for White's e-pawn. This is a fairly novel system that has slowly moved up the Elo-echelons. First, the 2500+ grandmasters Del Rio, Peralta and Mastrovasilis started playing 5...b5. Later it was adopted by 2600+ GMs Mareco, Volokitin and Grandelius. Next came the 2700+ category. Grischuk played it in a blitz game at the end of 2017, and then Wojtaszek and Duda adopted it

in 2018. And now Caruana is responsible for its introduction at 2800-level. The idea of playing ...b5 is actually known from a few other lines. Think of the topical Queen's Gambit line 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♘f3 ♘bd7 5.♗f4 dxc4 6.e3 b5!?. It is perhaps useful to note that our subject may also be reached via the Queen's Gambit Accepted: 1.d4 d5 2.c4 dxc4 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.♘c3 e6!? 5.e4 b5. In this line, 4...a6 5.e4 b5 6.e5 ♘d5 7.a4 e6 8.axb5 ♘b6!? was a favourite of Tony Miles, and the play actually reminds me a lot of the positions we will encounter below.

6.e5

The most logical response. White retrieves his gambit pawn 'for free'.

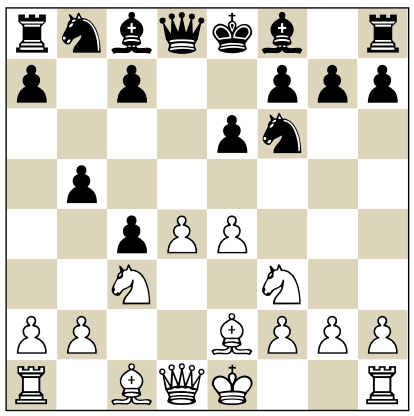
■ Indeed, 6.♘xb5 ♘xe4 ought to be comfortable for Black, and this is borne out by (the as yet rather limited) practice.



Now 7.♗xc4 is met by 7...♗b4+!, while the tricky 7.♕a4!? c6 (stronger than 7...♘c6 8.♘c3 ♘xc3 9.bxc3 ♗d7 10.♕xc4) 8.♘c3 (8.♘a3 c3!) 8...♘d6 looks fairly balanced. The time that it will take White to retrieve c4 (without giving up his light-squared bishop) will allow Black to complete his development.

Normal, therefore, is 7.♘c3 ♘d6!, when 8.♗xc4?! ♘xc4 9.♕a4+ ♘d7 (even stronger were the alternatives 9...♕d7 10.♕xc4 ♗a6 11.♕b3 ♘c6 and 9...c6 10.♕xc4 ♗a6; in both cases White has severe problems with his king and his light squares) 10.♕xc4 ♗b7 11.♗g5 ♗e7 12.♗xe7 ♕xe7 13.♕xc7 ♗xf3 14.gxf3 0-0 gave Black excellent compensation for the pawn in the blitz game Le Quang Liem-Grischuk, Huaian 2017. Instead of taking the pawn with 8.♗xc4, 8.♗e2 ♗e7 9.0-0 0-0 10.♘e5 ♗b7 11.♘xc4 ♘xc4 12.♗xc4 ♘c6! (12...♘d7=) 13.♗e3 ♗f6 was a tad better for Black already in Szustakowski-Schnider, Graz 2018.

■ There are many reasons why the modest 6.♗e2 is not a good idea:



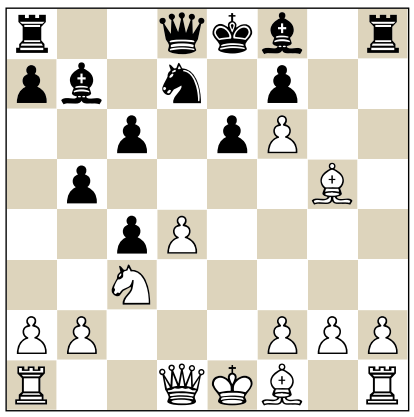
– 6...a6 is an innocent line from the Queen's Gambit Accepted.

– 6...♗a6 is also fine for Black.

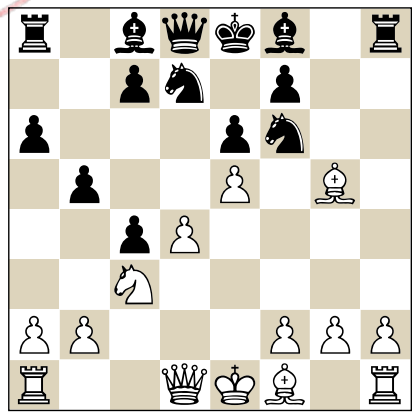
– 6...c6 is a line from the Geller Gambit in the Slav.

– 6...b4 7.♘a4 (7.e5!? ♘d5 8.♘e4 ♘b6) 7...♘xe4 8.♗xc4, and now, rather than 8...c6?! as in Sorm-Mager, Hofheim 2015, Black should realize that d4-d5 is not a threat. For example 8...♗e7 9.d5? ♗b7!.

■ While 6.♗g5 has been played quite a few times (with superior results for Black), it is actually not difficult to see why this should make the second player happy. White's 'naive' idea is that the play will transpose to the Botvinnik Variation after 6...c6 7.e5 h6 8.♗h4 g5 9.♘xg5 hxg5 10.♗xg5 ♘bd7 11.exf6 ♗b7.



However, after 6...a6! the same 'forced' line sees Black emerge with a powerful bishop on the long diagonal that is not obstructed by a pawn on c6!: 7.e5 h6 8.♗h4 g5 9.♘xg5 hxg5 10.♗xg5 ♘bd7



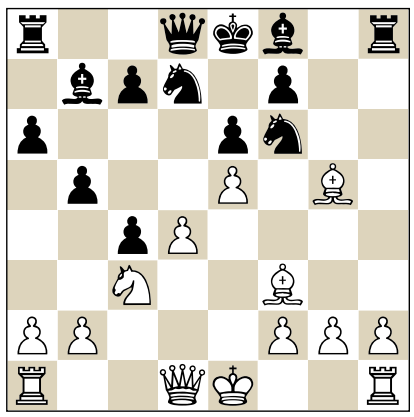
11.exf6 ♗b7. Compared to the Botvinnik Variation, Black has a pawn on a6 instead of on c6. This favours Black enormously, unless White can now favourably execute d4-d5. Let's check: 12.d5 ♘c5 13.dxe6 ♘xe6 but fortunately Black is doing great here (just look at that bishop on b7!).

Two practical examples:

– 14.♕xd8+ ♖xd8 15.♗e3 ♘d4 16.0-0-0 ♘f5 17.♗d2 ♗h6, and Black has strong pressure. In the game Kornev-Frolyanov, Moscow 2011, White now blundered into 18.f4? ♖xd2!.

– 14.♕e2 ♕d6 (14...♗c5! 15.♖d1 ♗d4) 15.♖d1 ♕c5 16.h4 ♗d6 17.♗e3?! ♕f5 18.g4 ♕h7 19.♖h3 0-0-0 and with ...♘f4 or simply ...♖he8 in the air Black was winning in Unuk-Kanmazalp, Graz 2018.

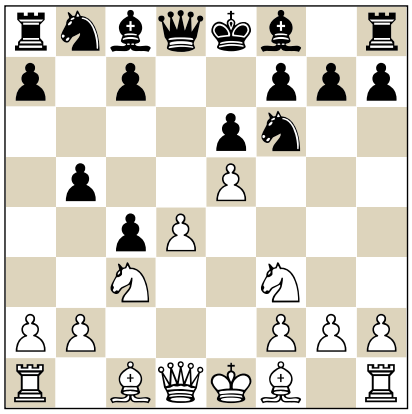
An alternative to 11.exf6 is 11.♗e2 (to exploit the absence of a pawn on c6). However, the tactics favour Black after 11...♗b7 12.♗f3



12...♘xe5! (12...♕b8 13.exf6 c5 14.d5 ♘e5 15.♕e2? – 15.♗e4 – 15...b4 favours Black, Ranaldi-Moroni, Monte-

video 2017) 13.♗xb7 (Black has a superior position following 13.dxe5 ♕xd1+ 14.♖xd1 ♗xf3 15.♗xf6 – 15.gxf3 ♘d7 – 15...♗xg2) 13...♘d3+ 14.♔f1 ♗h6! 15.♗xf6 ♕xf6 16.♘e4 ♕xd4 17.♗xa8 0-0, when Black is a rook down, with huge compensation. Re-establishing material parity seems more or less forced. Thus, after 18.♕f3 ♕xb2 19.♘f6+ ♔g7 20.♘h5+ ♔g6 21.♖d1 ♖xa8 22.g4 ♕d4, Black had the better game and eventually won in Vostrotin-Glazman, ICCF email 2006.

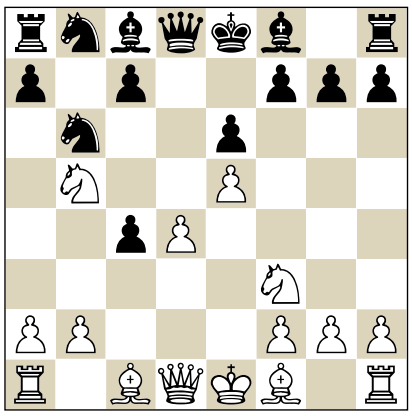
As an afterthought, if the above is too sharp for your taste, then also good is 11...♗h6 12.♗xh6 ♖xh6 13.exf6 ♕xf6, as in Kokje-Ernst, Groningen 2017.



6...♘d5 7.♘xb5

Here 7.a4!? c6 is a direct transposition to the Geller Gambit in the Slav Defence. Instead of 7...c6, 7...b4!? 8.♘e4 ♗a6 looks more than decent for Black and hasn't been tried so far!

7...♘b6



Black makes yet another move with his king's knight, which has now galloped along the same route as the Alekhine-knight. However, by comparison, White's centre is a lot less impressive than in the Alekhine, mainly because pawn c4 is black!

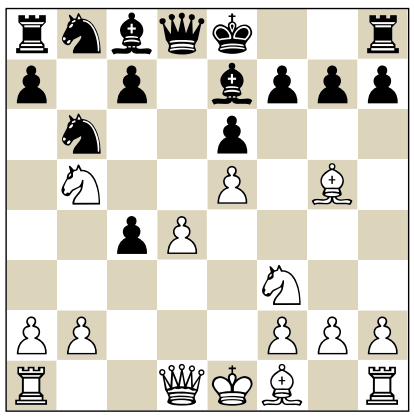
8.♗e2

White prepares castling.

Here, 8.♘c3 ♘c6 9.♗e2 ♗e7 (9...♗b4!?) 10.0-0 0-0 11.♗e3 transposes to the main game. And 11.♕d2 ♗b7 12.♖d1 ♘b4! was about even in Pashikian-Grandelius, Batumi 2018.

The fianchetto 8.g3 should be met by the normal developing moves 8...♗b7 9.♗g2 ♗e7 10.0-0 0-0.

The active 8.♗g5 seems to help Black. As Robert Ris explained in his Survey in Yearbook 124 (2017), Black doesn't actually mind trading the dark-squared bishops, since this will give him breathing room for his other pieces. After 8...♗e7



– 9.♗xe7 ♕xe7 10.♘c3 (note 10.♘a3?! c3!) 10...0-0 11.♗e2 ♖d8 12.♕c2 ♗b7 13.0-0 ♘c6! 14.♖ad1 ♘b4 15.♕c1 ♖ab8 Black was already slightly better in Sammalvuo-Grandelius, Puhajarve 2017.

– 9.♕d2 ♘c6 (again the knight is best-placed on c6) 10.♖c1 ♗a6 11.♗xe7 ♕xe7 (11...♘xe7?! 12.♘a3!) 12.a4 (but now 12.♘a3 is met by 12...♘b4!) 12...♘xa4 13.♗xc4, Stupak-Cornette, Rochefort 2017. And here, rather than 13...♖b8 14.b3!, Ris indicates 13...0-0, which seems alright for Black.

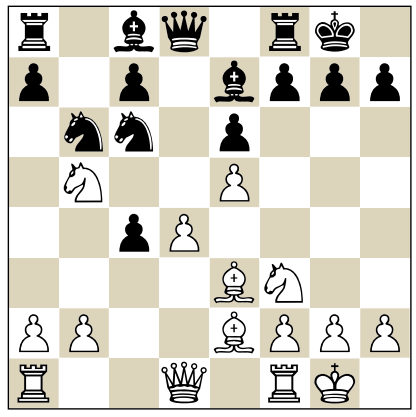
8...♘c6

Equally good is 8...♗e7, when after 9.0-0 ♘c6 10.♗e3 we have transposed to the main line.

9.0-0 ♗e7 10.♗e3

After 10.♘a3 Black is more or less forced to play 10...♗xa3! 11.bxa3 (true, he has lost a bunch of dark squares, but the light ones are his) 11...0-0 12.♗e3 ♗b7 13.♖c1 ♕d5 14.♕c2 ♘e7 15.♖fd1 ♖ab8, which was equal in Quintiliano-Pichot, Montevideo 2018. In the 10th round of the Batumi Olympiad Ding Liren played 10.♕d2 0-0 11.♕f4!? vs Duda.

10...0-0



This is the main tabiya of this novel line. White has tried many different moves, but no convincing path towards an opening edge has been found so far.

11.♘c3!?

White retreats of his own accord.

Let's start with a few minor options:

– Black had very decent play after 11.a3?! ♘a5! 12.♕c2 ♗b7 13.♖ad1 ♕d7 14.♘c3 ♕c6, Anton-Del Rio, Linares 2015.

– Black was very active after 11.a4?! ♗a6 12.♖c1 ♘b4 13.♘d2 c6 14.♘c3 ♖b8 15.a5 ♘6d5 16.♘xc4 c5!, Babula-Plischki, Teplice 2017.

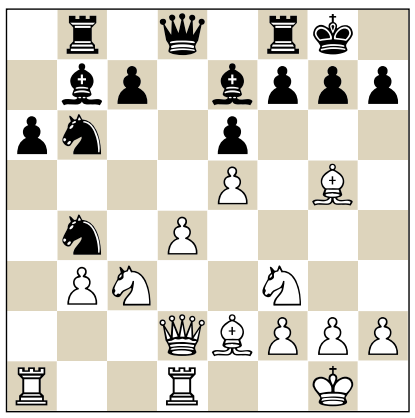
– White cannot transfer the queen to the kingside, because of 11.♕c2?! ♘b4 12.♕e4 ♕d5! and the queens are traded, Wichmann-Pötsch, Leipzig 2018.

– 11.♘d2 ♗a6 (11...a6 12.♘c3 ♘xd4 – Ris – is also fine) 12.a4 ♗xb5 (White is certainly not better after 12...♘a5) 13.axb5 ♘xd4 14.♘xc4 was Nihal-Del Rio, Port de Pollenca 2016, and although Black may not have played the most accurate moves, he can still keep things equal by means of 14...♘f5 (Ris).

The three major set-ups in the diagrammed position above are: the centralizing 11.♕d2, followed by ♖fd1, and 11.♕c1, followed by ♖fd1, and 11.♖c1 (concentrating on pawn c4).

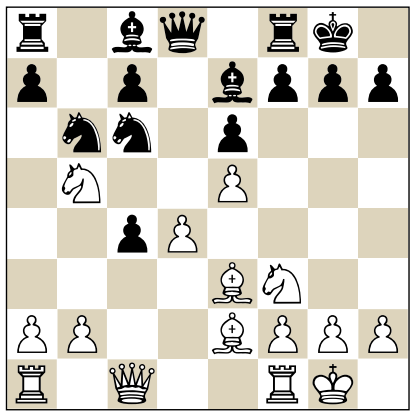
■ 11.♕d2 ♖b8 12.♖fd1 ♗b7 (12...♘b4 13.b3 a6 14.♘c3 cxb3 15.axb3 was

Deac-Volokitin, Calimanesti Caciulata 2016, and now 15...♘6d5 is equal, while 15...♗b7 is also fine, since it transposes to Wojtaszek-Duda) 13.b3 a6 14.♘c3 cxb3 15.axb3 ♘b4 16.♗g5



16...♘d7! (preparing ...c5 – don't fall for the 'automatic' 16...h6?, when White obtains a huge attack after 17.♗xh6! gxh6 18.♕xh6 – the big threat is 19.d5, followed by ♖d4, and 18...♘6d5 is met by 19.♘e4) 17.♕f4 c5 18.♖ac1 cxd4 19.♗xe7 ♕xe7 20.♖xd4, with at least equal chances for Black in Wojtaszek-Duda, Warsaw 2018.

■ 11.♕c1!?, vacating square d1 for the rook and aiming to win the c-pawn (sometimes by means of b3):



– 11...♗a6 12.♘c3, and now Black should avoid 12...♗b7?! (correct is 12...♘b4) 13.♖d1 ♖b8? (13...♘b4) 14.d5!±, Wang Yue-Mareco, Baku 2016.

– White was unable to prove an edge after 11...♖b8 12.♘c3 (winning the pawn is bad: 12.♗xc4 ♘xc4 13.♕xc4 ♗a6; and 12.b3 a6! 13.♘c3 cxb3 14.axb3 ♘b4 should be equal) 12...♘b4 13.♖d1 ♗b7 14.b3 cxb3 15.axb3 a6, Real-Flores, Buenos Aires 2017.

– Pretty good looks 11...♘b4!? 12.♘a3 (worse is 12.♗xc4 ♘xc4 13.♕xc4 ♗a6! 14.♗d2 ♕d5!) 12...♘d3 13.♕c2 ♗xa3 14.bxa3 ♗a6.

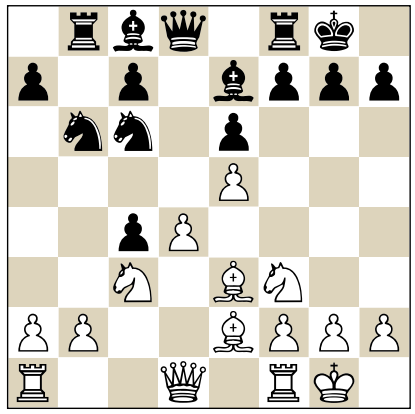
■ After 11.♖c1 I like 11...♖b8!? best, when 12.♘c3 (12.♗xc4? ♘xc4 13.♖xc4 ♘a5−+; 12.b3 a6! 13.♘c3 cxb3 14.axb3 ♘b4; 12.♘a3!? ♗xa3 13.bxa3 ♗b7 14.♗xc4 ♘xc4 15.♖xc4 ♘e7) 12...♗a6 (12...♘b4!) 13.♕d2 (13.b3!) 13...♘b4 14.♖fd1 ♘d3 15.♖b1 ♘d5 16.♘xd5 was Zoler-Gorodetzky, Israel 2018. Now, rather than 16...exd5, Black should take back with the queen: 16...♕xd5 17.b3 ♘b4!.

11...♖b8

The first new move of the game. Previously Black had played 11...♗b7, when it looks as if White has chances to preserve a slight plus:

– 12.a3 ♘a5 13.♕c2 ♘d5 14.♖ad1 ♖b8 15.♗d2 c6?! (15...♘b6!) 16.♘e4 h6 17.♗xa5 was agreed drawn, but surely White is slightly better here, Lalic-Boruchovsky, Pardubice 2018.

– 12.♘a4 ♘a5 13.♗d2 (13.♘c5!? ♗d5 14.♕c2 ♘d7 15.♖fd1) 13...♗c6 14.♗xa5 ♗xa4 15.♕d2, Sjugirov-Grachev, Sochi 2017, looks balanced after 15...♗c6.



12.a3 This prevents ...♘b4, but there are many other playable moves, like 12.♕c1, 12.♕d2, 12.♖c1 and 12.b3. Play is similar to the options we investigated on move 11.

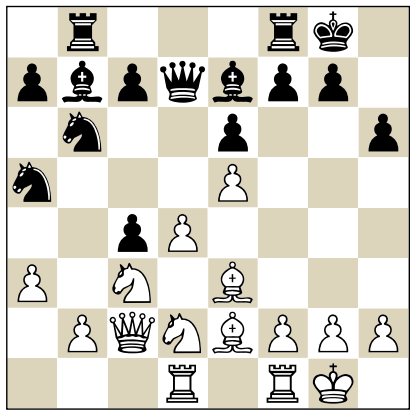
12...♗b7

If White has played a3, it becomes even more attractive to play 12...♘a5, which not only 'over-protects' pawn c4, but also eyes the b3-square.

13.♕c2 ♘a5 14.♖ad1!?

Mamedyarov has aggressive intentions (f2-f4). Otherwise it would be more logical to play 14.♖fd1.

14...h6 15.♘d2 ♕d7



The chances are about equal. Mamedyarov now executes his plan.

16.f4 ♘d5 17.♘xd5 ♗xd5 18.♕c3

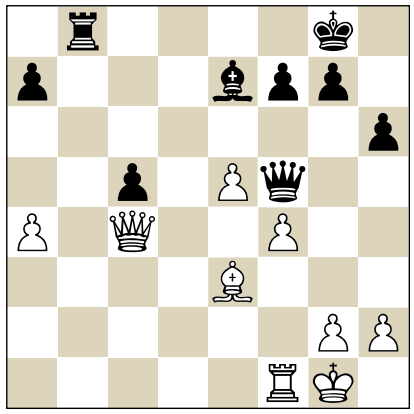
Black has good counterplay after the consistent 18.f5!? exf5 19.♖xf5 ♕e6! (19...♖xb2? 20.♕xb2 ♕xf5 21.♕b5!; 19...c5?! 20.dxc5 ♕c7 21.♘e4 ♗xe4 22.♕xe4 ♗xc5 23.e6!) 20.♖f2 c5.

18...♖b5!

Preparing to double rooks on the b-file.

19.♘xc4 ♘xc4 20.♗xc4 ♗xc4 21.♕xc4 ♖xb2 22.d5 exd5 23.♖xd5 ♕f5! 24.a4 24.♕xc7?? ♕e4!−+.

24...♖fb8 25.♖b5 c5 26.♖xb8+ ♖xb8



The position is completely equal now. Caruana created some chances but Mamedyarov held on to the draw, which was agreed on move 61.

In conclusion, 5...b5 is an exciting and fairly new way to spice up the Queen's Gambit and to stay away from the theoretical ramifications of the Vienna Variation. Do try this at home and in the tournament hall! ■

STATISTICS

Carlsen vs Caruana in 33 classical games

The stats contain a big promise

For the first time Magnus Carlsen will defend his world title against a younger opponent. What's more, never before was the difference in rating between the Champion and his Challenger so small (a negligible 3 points!). **VITALY GNIRENKO** looks at the stats as we approach what promises to be the most interesting match for the highest title in the 21st century.

If he wanted to, Magnus Carlsen could celebrate the fifth anniversary of his world title on November 22, 2018. It's highly probable that the title is still his on that day, as he defends his title for the third time in the period from 9 to 28 November. His opponent is the winner of the Candidates tournament in Berlin, Fabiano Caruana. In case of a victory, Magnus will become the second chess player after Garry Kasparov to become a four-time World Champion before reaching the age of 28. Carlsen will turn 28 on November 30.

Their first classical game Carlsen and Caruana played in 2010. A full overview of all their classical encounters you can find in *the table on the next page*.

Magnus Carlsen confidently leads with a score of +10, -5, =18. Another telling detail is that for more than three years the current challenger has failed to defeat the champion in a classical game.

But the history of the World Championship shows that positive results in the years leading up to the match are not always followed by victories in that match. *See the table below.*

The low reliability of a forecast based on previous results was confirmed by the outcome of the match between

Year	Contenders in the world championship match	Score before the world championship match	Score in the match for the world championship
1927	Capablanca-Alekhine	+5, -0, =7	+3, -6, =25
1935	Alekhine-Euwe	+2, -1, =4	+8, -9, =13
1972	Spassky-Fischer	+3, -0, =2	+2, -7, =11

	Tournament, venue	ECO	Magnus Carlsen Result in the tournament +	−	=	place	Result, colour		Fabiano Caruana Result in the tournament +	−	=	place
1	2010 Corus Chess, Wijk aan Zee	C77	5	1	7	**1**	½	½	1	3	9	**10**
2	2011 Biel Chess Festival	C45	5	1	4	**1**	1	0	2	4	4	**5**
3		C41					½	½				
4	2012 Tata Steel Masters, Wijk aan Zee	B67	4	1	8	**2-4**	½	½	4	1	8	**2-4**
5	2012 Tal Memorial, Moscow	D85	2	0	7	**1**	½	½	3	2	4	**2-3**
6	2012 Grand Slam Masters Final, Sao Paulo / Bilbao	C19	4	1	5	**1-2**	0	1	4	1	5	**1-2**
7		C00					1	0				
8	2013 Tata Steel Masters, Wijk aan Zee	A10	7	0	6	**1**	½	½	2	5	6	**12**
9	2013 Tal Memorial, Moscow	A07	3	1	5	**2**	0	1	3	2	4	**3**
10	2014 Zurich Chess Challenge, Zurich	C65	3	0	2	**1**	1	0	1	1	3	**3**
11	2014 Gashimov Memorial, Shamkir	C67	5	2	3	**1**	0	1	3	2	5	**2**
12		A49					1	0				
13	2014 Norway Chess, Stavanger	D70	2	0	7	**2**	½	½	2	2	5	**4-5**
14	2014 Olympiad, Tromsø	B01	5	2	2	**-**	1	0	5	1	3	**-**
15	2014 Sinquefield Cup, St. Louis	C24	2	1	7	**2**	0	1	7	0	3	**1**
16		B32					½	½				
17	2015 Tata Steel Masters, Wijk aan Zee	B31	6	1	6	**1**	1	0	4	3	6	**7**
18	2015 Grenke Chess Classic, Baden-Baden	C67	3	1	3	**1-2**	½	½	1	0	6	**3-4**
19	2015 Gashimov Memorial, Shamkir	A90	5	0	4	**1**	1	0	2	1	6	**3-4**
20	2015 Norway Chess, Stavanger	C67	2	4	3	**7-8**	0	1	1	2	6	**5-6**
21	2015 Sinquefield Cup, St. Louis	C78	3	2	4	**2-5**	1	0	1	3	5	**8-9**
22	2015 London Chess Classic, London	C67	2	0	7	**1-3**	½	½	0	0	9	**5-7**
23	2016 Tata Steel Masters, Wijk aan Zee	A07	5	0	8	**1**	½	½	5	2	6	**2-3**
24	2016 Olympiad, Baku	B01	5	0	5	**-**	½	½	4	0	6	**-**
25	2017 Grenke Chess Classic, Baden-Baden	C42	1	0	6	**2-3**	½	½	2	1	4	**2-3**
26	2017 Altibox Norway Chess, Stavanger	C84	1	2	6	**7-9**	½	½	1	1	7	**4-6**
27	2017 Sinquefield Cup, St. Louis	C78	3	1	5	**2-3**	½	½	1	2	6	**7**
28	2017 Isle of Man Open, Douglas	C78	6	0	3	**1**	1	0	5	1	3	**5**
29	2017 London Chess Classic, London	D27	2	1	6	3-5	½	½	3	0	6	**1-2**
30	2018 Tata Steel Masters, Wijk aan Zee	C42	5	0	8	**1-2**	½	½	1	4	8	**11**
31	2018 Grenke Chess Classic, Karlsruhe	E60	2	0	7	**2**	½	½	4	0	5	**1**
32	2018 Altibox Norway Chess, Stavanger	C24	2	1	5	**2-4**	1	0	3	1	4	**1**
33	2018 Sinquefield Cup, St. Louis	C42	2	0	7	**1-3**	½	½	2	0	7	**1-3**
						Total:	**+10 −5 =18**					
						Total score:	**19 - 14**					

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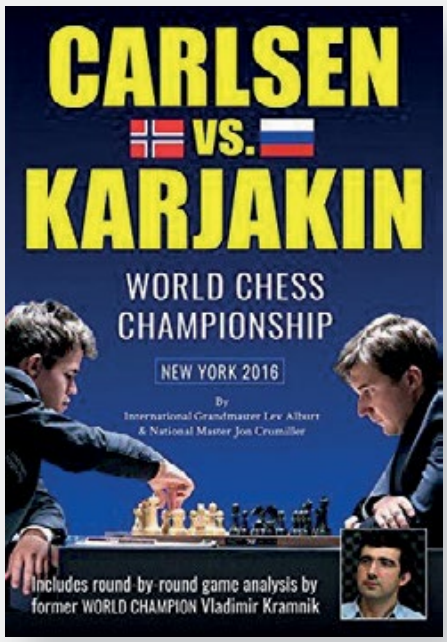

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As of November 1, 2018, Carlsen's rating is 2835, while Caruana's is 2832, an almost negligible difference of 3 points!

Magnus Carlsen and Sergey Karjakin in New York two years ago. Having a significant lead in their personal score before the match (+4, –1, =16), the World Champion could not defeat the Challenger in the classical part of the match (+1, –1, =10). Only his success in the rapid tiebreak allowed the Norwegian to retain the title.

Here it may be appropriate to note that the rule of deciding the classical World Champion based on the results in fast chess, which will be applied again in the upcoming match, defies common sense. These days chess competitions are divided into three types: classical, rapid and blitz. In each of them separate competitions are held to determine the respective World Champions. As they have approved the division of chess competitions into three types, it remains a mystery why FIDE uses two additional types of time controls to determine the world's best chess player in classical chess. In this respect the old rule that to claim the title, the Challenger had to defeat the World Champion, looks more just.

The two best players

The upcoming match in London is unique, because for the first time Magnus Carlsen will have to defend his title against a chess player who is younger than he is. At the same time, Fabiano Caruana is not only the winner of the Candidates tournament, but also the second player in the world rankings.

As of November 1, 2018, Carlsen's rating is 2835, while Caruana's is 2832, an almost negligible difference of 3 points! In the previous matches in which Carlsen defended his title – as the top-rated player in the world – he met Vishy Anand (in 2014), who at the time was ranked 6th (71 points behind) and Sergey Karjakin (in 2016) who was ranked 9th (81 points behind).

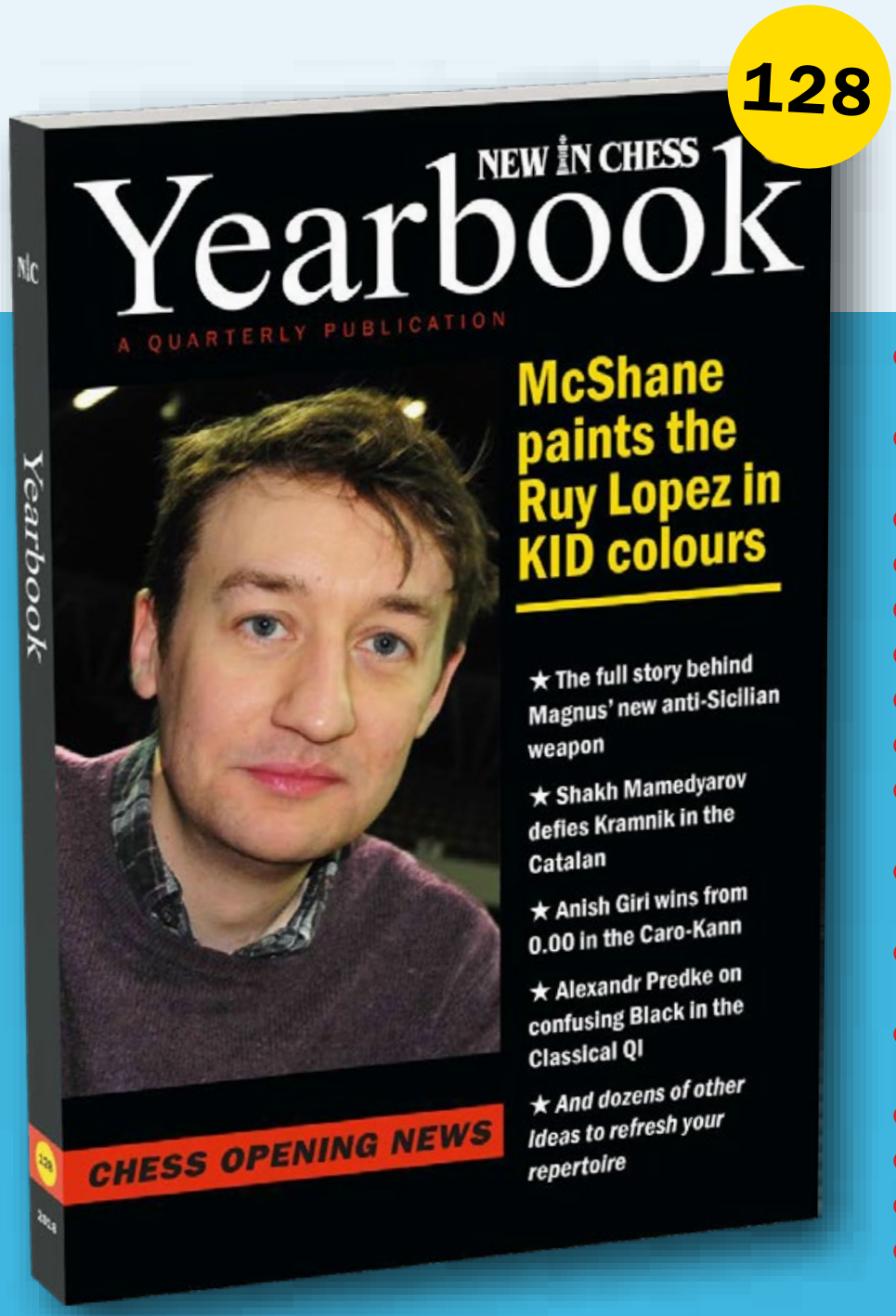
Magnus' new opponent is in great shape. After his confident victory in the Candidates tournament, Caruana demonstrated consistently high results in tournaments with a classical time control, outshining the results of the World Champion.

In this year, Carlsen and Caruana met in four classical tournaments. Only once, in Wijk aan Zee, did the World Champion finish ahead of the Challenger. As this tournament preceded the Candidates tournament, one might see the Tata Steel Chess Tournament as a warm-up for Caruana only weeks for the crucial test in Berlin. Following his brilliant victory Berlin, Caruana twice was the sole winner in tournaments where the World Champion also took part. On one occasion, at the Sinquefield Cup in St. Louis, the Champion and the Challenger shared 1st-3rd place with Levon Aronian. If we look at the total score between Carlsen and Caruana in 2018, we see only a small advantage for the World Champion: +1, -0, =3.

All these facts and stats are evidence that the two best chess players in the world will meet in London and that it seems safe to say that we will witness the most interesting match for the World Championship in the 21st century. ■

‘There is something about nearly every opening one can think of.’

– *British Chess Magazine*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